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Âu Cơ + Lạc Long Quân & their 100 children

FOLK TALES

OF

VIETNAM

VƯƠNG ĐẰNG

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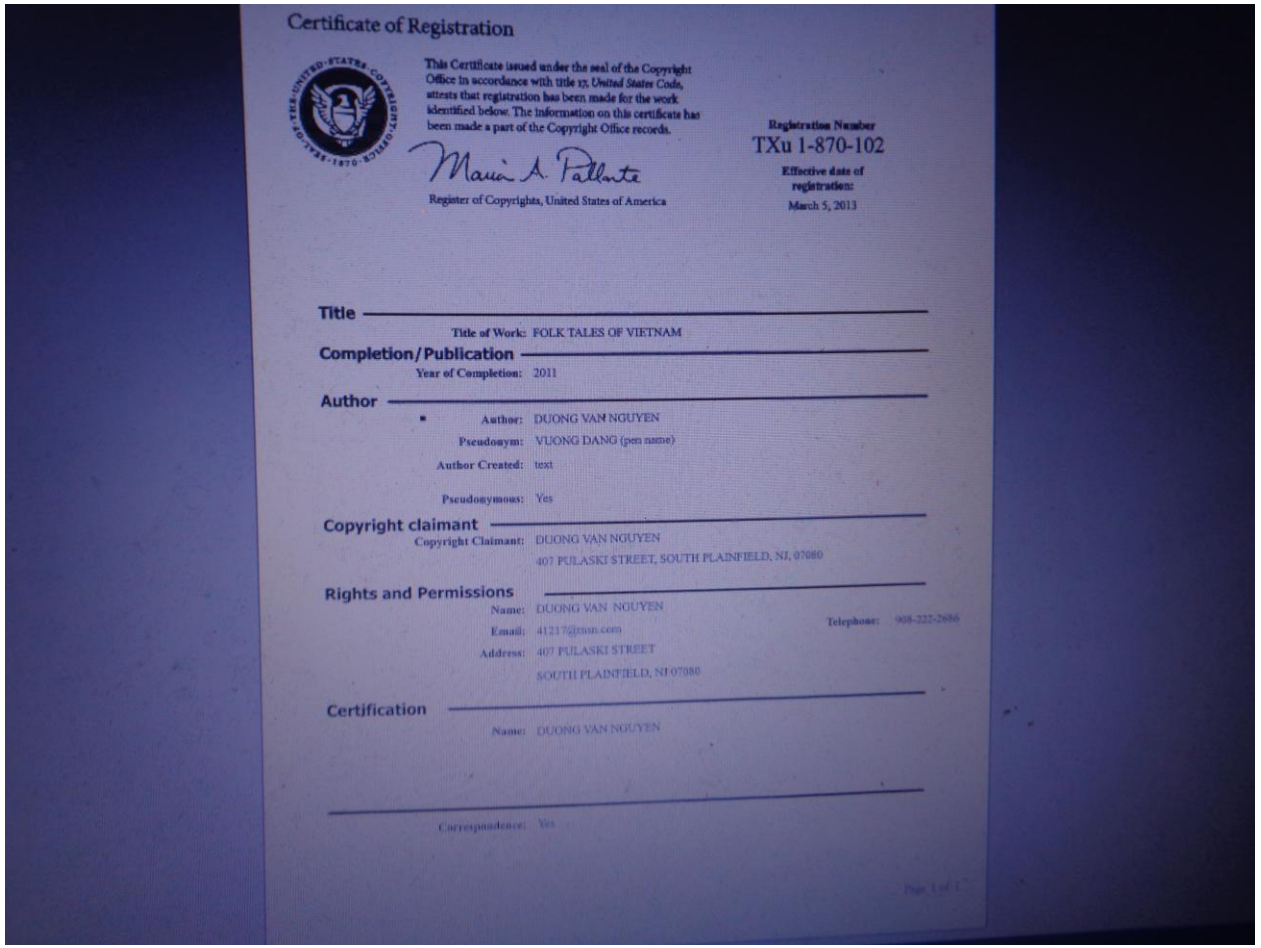

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Folk Tales of Vietnam

My Special Gratitude & Thank
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of
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at
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WHO HELPED ME
WITH THE USE OF
THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

*

For my grandchildren
in the U.S. and Vietnam

*

For children and people who
like to read/listen folk tales

CONTENT

Note: In order to introduce the Vietnamese proper names of persons or localities (cities, provinces, villages, etc.) how they are written in Vietnamese, we do not translate or write them without Vietnamese

accents. However, for English speaking readers, sometimes when it is necessary, we explain the meaning or location of these Vietnamese vocabularies.

1. Lạc Long Quân & Âu Cơ
2. Phù Đổng Thiên Vương
3. Thick Cake & Steamed Cake
4. Sơn Tinh Thủy Tinh
5. Trọng Thủy – Mỵ Châu
6. Betel & Areca-nut
7. Táo Quân
8. Tấm & Cám
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PREFERENCES
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1.

LẠC LONG QUÂN & ÂU CƠ

EXPLANATION

Long Nữ = King of Dragon's daughter living in the ocean
Long Vương = King of Dragon
Lạc Long Quân = King descended from the dragon race of the Lạc Việt Tribe
Ngư Tinh = Monster like a fish.
Cẩu Đầu Sơn = the mountain having the head of the sea lion
Cẩu Đầu Thủy = the river/sea having the head of the sea

lion
Bạch Long Vĩ = the white dragon's tail
Hồ Tinh = Fox Devil
Cái = main, big
Xác Cáo = Fox Dead Body
Tây Hồ = West Lake
Hồ = Fox
Chiên đàn = a kind of the very big, shadowy tree having large leaves
Mộc Tinh = Wood Devil
Quỷ Xương Cuồng = the Devil of Crazy Bone.
Đế Lai = the King named Lai
Hùng Vương = the name of the first king dynasty of Vietnam
Bách Việt = Hundred Vietnamese Races
Lạc hầu = Lạc mandarin,
Lạc tướng = Lạc general
Quan Lang = the son of the king (= prince)
Mỵ Nương = the daughter of the king (= princess)
Văn Lang = the first national name of Vietnam

Very very far from the present time, in Lĩnh Nam there was a chief named Lộc Tục—his noble alias was Kinh Dương Vương—whose strength surpassed everybody, and he had the skill to go on the water like on the ground. One day, Kinh Dương Vương had taken a trip to Động Đình Lake, where he met Long Nữ who was Long Vương's daughter; they married each other, and later they had a son named Sùng Lãm.

When Sùng Lãm grew up, he was very strong; he could lift high a very big block of stone which two people could measure horizontally. Like his father, Sùng Lãm had the skill to go on the water like on the ground. When Sùng Lãm succeeded to his father, he took the noble alias as Lạc Long Quân.

At that time, Lĩnh Nam was still deserted, no place was in peace; Lạc Long Quân determined to travel everywhere.

Getting to the Southeast seashore, Lạc Long Quân encountered a giant fish. It lived for a long time; its body was 50 feet long; its tail looked like a butterfly's wings; its mouth could swallow 10 persons at the same time. When swimming, it caused very high waves; all passing boats were sunk and all people were swallowed by it. They called it Ngư Tinh. Ngư Tinh's residence was a large cave deep down to the bottom of the sea; above the cave there was a range of mountain dividing the seashore into two regions.

Determined to kill the monster for the sake of the people, Lạc Long Quân made a very solid large boat; he had forged a big iron dart with many sharp angles and burned it to red-hot; then he had brought it to the boat and oared right away to Ngư Tinh. Lạc Long Quân had lifted the dart and pretended to throw a person into the monster's mouth. Ngư Tinh opened its mouth to receive the prey. Fast and strong Lạc Long Quân threw the dart to its mouth. Being burned in its throat, Ngư Tinh rose up to resist, hit its tail against Lạc Long Quân's boat. Immediately Lạc Long Quân pulled out his sword and chopped Ngư Tinh into three parts. Its head transformed into a sea lion. Lạc Long Quân took blocks of stone to barricade off its way and killed it; then he threw its head on a mountain; consequently, people called this mountain Cẩu Đầu Sơn. The middle part of Ngư Tinh drifted to Mạn Cẩn Region; now it is still called Cẩu Đầu Thủy. For Ngư Tinh's tail part, Lạc Long Quân had cast off its skin, then brought it to cover an island at sea; that island was also named Bạch Long Vĩ.

After getting rid of Ngư Tinh's danger, Lạc Long Quân came to Long Biên. Here there was a fox having nine tails which lived more than a millennium and became a devil. It lived in a very deep den under the foot of the mountain in the west of Long Biên. This devil often transformed into a human being who mixed in with the people; he seduced and kidnapped young girls to its den then raped them. From the region of Long Biên to Tản Viên Mountain, everywhere people were harmed by Hồ Tinh; many residents had to leave their rice fields, orchards and moved to other areas for living and working.

Having pity on the people, Lạc Long Quân, alone by himself, and with his own sword, went to Hồ Tinh's den and tried to find a way to destroy this devil.

When Lạc Long Quân had just come to the entrance of the den, the devil saw the human shadow and jumped out at once. Right away Lạc Long Quân used his supernatural power to make rain, thunder, and storm to surround it tightly. They continuously fought for three days and nights; gradually the devil was exhausted, tried to run away. Lạc Long Quân followed it and he chopped off its head. The devil was transformed back to its original appearance as a giant fox having nine tails. Lạc Long Quân entered the den and saved those who were still alive; then he commanded water-species to augment the influx of tide from the Cái River for destroying the den. The water ran like a waterfall, flattened the mountain out, swirled the den becoming an abyss which the people at that time called Xác Cáo Marsh, in a later generation people have called Tây Hồ.

After the fox calamity was pacified, the people surrounding the area came back, cultivated on the field around Tây Hồ; and they built houses, established the village named Hồ Village which has still lasted until nowadays.

Seeing that the people in the Long Biên area were in peace for working and living, Lạc Long Quân went up to the mountainous region and reached Phong Châu area. There had been a century-old tree named chiên đàn which had previously had the luxuriant branches and leaves a giving shadow on a large ground; but after many years the tree had been dried, withered and became a devil which the people called Mộc Tinh. This devil was extraordinarily atrocious and cun- ning. Its shelter was not permanent, sometimes in this jungle, other times in others. It also transformed into different appearances hiding all over places, trapped and caught people for his meals. Everywhere there were tragic cries and laments. Lạc Long Quân determined to destroy the devil for saving people. Lạc Long Quân had to go through many jungles, and finally, after a lot of hardship, he found its shelter. Lạc Long Quân continuously fought with the devil through one hundred days and nights, making trees breaking, rocks falling and the place dusty and dark, but he could not overcome it. At the end Lạc Long Quân had to use some musical instruments,

such as gong and drum, etc. so that it had gotten scared and ran toward the South West and stayed around that region; people called it Quỷ Xương Cuồng.

Putting down the devilish danger, Lạc Long Quân saw that the people in this region still lived in poverty and privation; they had to cover their body with the tree bark, to sleep on hay mats; therefore, he instructed them how to cultivate sweet rice plants, how to cook rice in a bamboo pipe, and how to cut trees and build piled houses for the prevention of ferocious beasts. The people were grateful for his acts and built for Lạc Long Quân a splendid castle on a high mountain. But he did not live there long; he often came back to visit his mother at the palace under the sea surface and reminded the people that: "Whenever there is a danger, call me, I will be back at once."

At that time Đế Lai from the North brought his troops to invade the South. Đế Lai also brought along his beloved daughter, named Âu Cơ, who was very beautiful and had many maids. Realizing that Lĩnh Nam had lovely scenery, also a lot of birds, animals, and precious wood, Đế Lai ordered his soldiers to build a fortress to stay for a long time. Having to provide extremely miserable services, the people could not afford to anymore; they looked toward the East Sea and called loudly: "Dad! Why didn't you come back to save us!" In a wink, Lạc Long Quân already arrived.

After hearing the story from the people, Lạc Long Quân was transformed into a very handsome young man with hundreds of servants who walked and sang at the same time, and they directly went to Đế Lai's residence. Lạc Long Quân could not see Đế Lai anywhere but only a girl with her beauty without compare and innumerable maids and soldiers. That beautiful girl was Âu Cơ. Seeing Lạc Long Quân majestic, elegant, she was madly in love with him and asked to go with him. Lạc Long Quân brought her to live in his palace at the high mountain. Đế Lai came back; he did not find his daughter; immediately he commanded his soldiers to look for her everywhere. From day to day Lạc Long Quân ordered thousands of fierce beasts which blocked roads, tore their bodies and made them run away. Reluctantly Đế Lai had to withdraw his troops and retreated to the North.

After Lạc Long Quân and Âu Cơ lived together for a while, she was pregnant; then she bore an amniotic sac which contained a hundred eggs. After seven days each egg hatched a male infant. These hundred infants grew up very fast as they were blown up; all of them were handsome, strong, and extraordinarily intelligent.

Tens of years passed; even though Lạc Long Quân lived in happiness with his hundred children, but his heart still missed the palace under the sea surface. One day Lạc Long Quân said good-bye to Âu Cơ and their children, then he was transformed into a dragon, took off to the cloud, and flew to the sea. Âu Cơ and his group of children would have liked to go along but they could not; therefore, sadly they had to stay in the mountain. Day by day they waited so long, but there was no news from Lạc Long Quân. Missing her husband so much, Âu Cơ stood on the top of a high mountain, facing to the East Sea and called: "Oh! Father of our children! Why didn't you come back because I and your children are in such anguish!"

Immediately Lạc Long Quân came back; Âu Cơ reproached her husband:

- Originally I was born and raised in the high mountain and large cave; we lived together and I bore one hundred sons; however, you had the heart to leave us and didn't care that we were in the situation of abandon and anguish.

Lạc Long Quân responded:

- I am of the dragon race and you, fairy race; we can't live together for so long. Now I bring fifty sons to the seashore and you bring fifty to the mountain region so that we share each other to govern every place. You are on the mountain and I am the in the seashore. If we are facing danger, we will inform and help each other. Do not forget that!

Then both bade farewell to each other. Their hundred sons had gone everywhere and became the ancestors of the Bách Việt people. The oldest son stayed in Phong Châu where he was made the king of Văn Lang, alias Hùng Vương. King Hùng Vương divided the country into 15 provinces and assigned bureaucratic and martial officers who were called Lạc hầu, Lạc tướng. The son of the king (= prince) was called Quan Lang and the daughter (= princess), Mỵ Nương. The throne was succeeded as the Hùng Vương dynasty.

Lạc Long Quân was the developer of Lĩnh Nam Region who had brought peace for the people. King Hùng Vương was the founder of Văn Lang Kingdom and the Hùng Vương dynasty was succeeded through 18 kings. Due to the legend of Lạc Long Quân and Âu Cơ, the Vietnamese people still consider they are descendants of Fairy and Dragon.

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2.

PHÙ ĐỔNG THIÊN VƯƠNG

EXPLANATION

Phù Đổng Thiên Vương = Godsend King in Phù Đổng

In the time of King Hùng Vương, VI, the Ân Dynasty in China wanted to invade the Văn Lang Kingdom. King Hùng Vương set up an altar and asked Lạc Long Quân for help. Lạc Long Quân appeared in a dream and advised the King to search a talented person to save the country. King Hùng Vương Vương sent his messengers throughout his kingdom to seek this person.

In Gióng Village, there was a three-year-old boy who could not speak, nor walked around. When the King's messenger came to the village, the mother joked to her child:

- When will you be able to help our country?

All of a sudden the child stood up and told the mother to invite the King's messenger. When the messenger came, the child told him:

- Go back and ask the King to cast for me a big horse and a sword in iron. I will destroy the invaders.

After the King's messenger left, the boy started eating so much to such an extent that there is no more food in his house. Knowing this was a god sent by Lạc Long Quân to defeat the enemies, the whole villagers contributed to feeding the boy. He grew up extremely fast and became someone as a godsend general called Thánh Gióng (= the God of Gióng Village). After knowing about the Thánh Gióng's story, King Hùng Vương asked all of the blacksmiths in the kingdom to cast the horse and sword.

When the King's messenger brought the iron horse and sword to Thánh Gióng's house, he took the sword and mounted on the horse. The iron horse became alive, ran as a flying bird, and Spitfire. Then Thánh Gióng led the Vietnamese troops to fight against the Ân invaders. He used his sword to chop them up. Wherever Thánh Gióng's horse reached, the enemies were disintegrated. Because of the massive Ân invaders, his sword broke. He then uprooted bamboo trees along the road and used them as weapon to kill the enemies. Finally, the whole Ân invaders were annihilated.

Finishing the battle Thánh Gióng rode his horse on to the top of Sóc Sơn Mountain and flew to the sky. King Hùng Vương and all Vietnamese people were grateful for his accomplishment, they constructed a temple to worship him and named him Phù Đổng Thiên Vương.

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3.

THE STORY OF
BÁNH DẦY & BÁNH CHƯNG

EXPLANATION = GIẢI THÍCH

Bánh dầy & bánh chưng = two special cakes in Vietnamese New Year; bánh dầy is in a round form; bánh chưng,
square form
Phong Châu = the capital of Vietnam at that time
Tết = Vietnamese New Year based on lunar calendar,
usually after the Western New Year about 25-45 days.

At that time, King Hùng Vương, VI, reigned the country. The King was old, sitting on the throne so many years. Realizing that his health became weak day by day, the King had the intention to select a successor. The King's wives totally bore twenty-two sons. All were grown up. The King thought: "In terms of talent there were some surpassing others, but that was the reason to choose carefully, especially to avoid the rivalry among them."

This was an issue the King often thought about. Finally owing to a courtier offering a solution, the King decided a contest to select a successor.

Then the King summoned all of Quan Lang. When they arrived completely, the King commanded:

- I know that I am going to die soon. I would like to transfer the crown to one of you. Now, each of you finds or makes a special food for worshipping our ancestors. I will select whoever has good food which goes with my taste.

Hearing the King commanded that, the princes competed with each other by ordering their servants going all over the places to find the special food. They went to the mountains and the sea without missing anywhere. Whatever was heard delicious and special, they tried their best for finding it.

Among these twenty-two princes, there was Lang Liêu, the eighteenth prince. Lang Liêu already passed many lonely days because he had been an orphan without mother since he was young. While other princes rushing to find something special, Lang Liêu just lay down at home. No one helped him in this matter. There were only three more days to the contest but Lang Liêu still had nothing. That night, while lying and crossing his hand across his forehead, Lang Liêu recalled all the good meals in the past he had. Lang Liêu had been thinking and he went into his sleep without realizing. Lang Liêu dreamed that he and his twenty-one brothers had been making the cake for the contest. Lang Liêu did not know where to begin, but suddenly there was a goddess coming from the sky to help him to make the cake.

The goddess said:

- There is nothing bigger in the world than the sky and the earth, there is nothing more precious in life than rice. We don't have to prepare many things, just two significant cake is enough. Please pick bad warts from this sweet rice, then go to find some beans for me.

After that Lang Liêu saw the goddess took out some banana leaves, large and green. While wrapping up, the goddess explained:

- This cake symbolizes the earth. On the earth there are plants, trees, and fields; so the form must be square. Inside the cake, it also must have some meat and beans for the significance that the earth carries animals, plants and trees, etc.. Then, cook the sweet rice to its best glutinous status; beat it to make a cake symbolizing the sky; the color must be white, round, and curved in shape like the sky …

Waking up, Lang Liêu began to make the same cakes in his dream.

On the day when princes brought their meals to offer to the King was the most tumultuous one in Phong Châu. There were so crowded. People from all regions were

excited to celebrate a Tết (= Vietnamese New Year) rarely happening: It began with a contest of meals and ended with the coronation of the new king.

Right at sunrise, King Hùng Vương came by litter to proceed with the family ancestor ceremony. Gongs and drums resounded jubilantly. Everyone was anxiously waiting for the moment in which examiners graded the meals.

And here came the expected moment. All princes' meals, such as peacock pie, phoenix baloney, bear hand, rhinoceros liver, etc., could not compare to Lang Liêu's two rustic cakes. At the first sight of his tray, most of them shook their heads and pouted their lips. But, after tasting, all of them nodded their heads in compliment. The Lạc general slightly rubbed his hands:

- This is a meal having extraordinary flavor made of ordinary things.

Particularly King Hùng Vương was very surprised about the strange cake he just ate. The King turned up and down, carefully contemplated other cakes not yet opened. The King summoned Lang Liêu to the court hall and questioned him how to make this cake. The prince sincerely told him everything, not forgetting his strange dream.

The King held and raised these two cakes so that everyone could see and clearly explained the reasons why he selected them over other plates. The King said:

- They are not only delicious and precious but also having several special significances: They show the son's filial piety, respecting parents as earth and sky; they fully describe a picture of our ricefield homeland. They are easy to be made of the most God and Earth's gems which can be made by everybody. It must be thought by someone talented.

It became a custom: Every year, always before Tết, everybody has made these two cakes, the so-called "bánh chưng, bánh dầy," for worshipping family ancestors.

After becoming the king, Prince Lang Liêu
had the noble alias as Tiết Liêu Vương; he was King Hùng Vương VII. At that time there were several princes who had failed the contest became jealous and had bad sentiment toward Lang Liêu. Therefore, after the father king died, they tightly hold on their own

land. They built wood fences around their regions as last-ditch entrenchments, having the intention to rival LangLiêu.

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4.

SƠN TINH & THỦY TINH

EXPLANATION

Sơn Tinh = Mountain Devil/King
Thủy Tinh = Sea Devil/King
King Hùng Vương, XVIII = the last king of Hùng Vương Dynasty

King Hùng Vương, XVIII, had a daughter named My Nương who was so beautiful. She was highly loved by her king father. The King wanted to select for her a really worthy husband.

One day there were two suitors requesting to meet the king. One of them who lived in the region of Ba Vì Mountain was handsome and extraordinarily talented. He pointed his hand to the east, it transformed the green rice field, and to the west, it became a range of mountains. The people in this region called him Sơn Tinh.

Living far away in the East Seat the other one who was not less talented than the other suitor called the wind, the wind came, and asked for the rain, the rain dropped. This young man was called Thủy Tinh. One was the lord of the high mountain region, one was the lord of the blue sea region; both were worthy of being King Hùng Vương's sons-in-law.

King Hùng Vương was in divided mind as to whom he accepted and to whom he refused. The King convened the Lạc Hầu conference, but there was no good solution. Finally, the King ordered:

- I'm pleased with both of you, but I have only one daughter. Therefore, tomorrow whoever came first with wedding presents—including one hundred rolls of sweet rice, two hundred pairs of square sweet rice cake, an elephant having nine tusks, a rooster having nine spurs, a horse having nine red hair—will be granted to escort the bride home.

The next morning Sơn Tinh already arrived with complete wedding presents and was permitted to escort the bride to his mountainous region. Coming late, Thủy Tinh who could not get the bride was very upset and led his troops to pursue Sơn Tinh and his bride; Thủy Tinh persisted in taking back Mỵ Nương.

Thủy Tinh commanded the rain and wind which became a violent storm shaking the whole region, and he made the water level of the river to increase torrentially in pursuing and fighting against Sơn Tinh. The water covered rice plants and fields, then flooded houses and dwellings.

Sơn Tinh who never flinched used his magic to heighten each hill, to move each range of mountains to hold the torrent. The more the water level was augmented, the more Sơn Tinh made hills and mountains growing. Both of them continued to fight each other for months; at the end, Thủy Tinh exhausted and he had to withdraw his troops.

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5.

TRỌNG THỦY & MỴ CHÂU

EXPLANATION

An Dương Vương = the king who created Âu Lạc State
after 18 kings of the Hùng Vương Dynasty.
Kim Quy = the name of the Deity in the form of a tortoise
Cổ Loa = the name of the fortress in the shape of a spiral
Nam Hải = a big tribe or a very small country next to
Vietnam in China
Âu Lạc = the second national name of Vietnam

After helping An Dương Vương build Cổ Loa Fortress, Deity Kim Quy thought of its protection against outside enemies; he gave An Dương Vương his toenail for making a bow protecting the Fortress. According to the Deity's instruction, the bow which has the bolt made of his toenail will reach its target one hundred per cent, and with just one shot it can kill thousands of enemies.

Among his courtiers, An Dương Vương had selected a person named Cao Lỗ who was skillful in bow making and assigned him to do it. Cao Lỗ tried his best effort for many days for its completion. The bow was very big and hard, different from other regular ones, only an athlete could be able to draw it. An Dương Vương had extremely treasured the bow, and he always hung it next to his bed.

At that time Triệu Đà was the king of Nam Hải. A couple of times Triệu Đà led his troops in order to occupy Âu Lạc. Nevertheless, because An Dương Vương had the Deity's bow, so many Nam Hải soldiers were killed; therefore, Triệu Đà had reluctantly held his troops and waited for another opportunity. Triệu Đà had realized that it is not beneficial in using troops, so he made peace with An Dương Vương and assigned his son named Trọng Thủy to go into Âu Lạc for having good relations between two countries with the main intention to destroy the deity's bow.

During his stay for good relations, Trọng Thủy met Mỵ Châu, a girl having unsurpassable beauty, who was An Dương Vương's beloved daughter. Trọng Thủy felt in love with Mỵ Châu; gradually Mỵ Châu also loved him. Both became very close; there is no place in Cổ Loa Fortress that Mỵ Châu did not bring him to visit. An Dương Vương did not suspect anything. Realizing that they were in love with each other, at once the King married Mỵ Châu to Trọng Thủy.

In one moonlight, starry night Mỵ Châu and Trọng Thủy were sitting on a white slab of stone in the middle of garden, looking at the Fortress' very high range of walls. The cold wind blew; clouds floated far away; more and more the night deepened... In their whispering conversation Trọng Thủy asked his wife:

- Honey! Is there any secret in Âu Lạc so that nobody can win in a battle?

Mỵ Châu responded:

- There is none, my sweetheart! Âu Lạc already had high citadel and deep moat, and also possesses the deity's bow which shoots just one shot killing thousands of enemies; therefore, no one can overcome it.

Trọng Thủy pretended to be surprised; he feigned as if he had just heard about the deity's bow for the first time; he expressed the desire to see the bow. Without hesitation, Mỵ Châu ran to his father's bed and took the deity's bow and showed it to her husband. She also told him that its bolt was Deity Kim Quy's toenail and explain to Trọng Thủy how to shoot. Attentively Trọng Thủy listened and examined the bow, its frame, and measure for a long time; then he gave it back to his wife for putting away.

The next day Trọng Thủy asked the king's permission to return to his homeland for visiting his father, and he reported to Triệu Đà about the deity's bow. Triệu Đà assigned a family servant who specialized in bows to made a bolt that looked like that of An Dương Vương. When the counterfeit had been done, Trọng Thủy hid it inside his clothes and went to Âu Lạc again.

An Dương Vương used to pamper his daughter. Realizing that his daughter was very happy when reunited with her husband, he ordered servants to prepare a feast for three of them enjoying together. Trọng Thủy drank half-heartily, but An Dương Vương and Mỵ Châu were dead drunk. Taking advantage while his father-in-law and his wife were drunk, immediately Trọng Thủy came into An Dương Vương's bedroom, had taken off the bolt made of Deity Kim Quy's toenail, and replaced it by the counterfeit bolt made of toenail of a regular turtle.

The next day, seeing her husband who showed anxiety, continuously standing than sitting down, Mỵ Châu asked him:

- It seems that you're anxious about something, aren't you?

Trọng Thủy responded:

- Now I am going to leave you. My Dad instructed that I must go back to moving to the North, and it is very, very far from here.

Mỵ Châu was sad and kept silent. Trọng Thủy continued:

- Now we are going to be apart, not knowing when we will see each other again. Unfortunately, if there is a war, you may not be here anymore. Where do I know to find you?

Mỵ Châu answered:

- I have a coat made of goose feathers. Wherever I go, I will spread them along the road. You just follow the goose feather trace to look for me.

After that Mỵ Châu sobbed her heart out.

After returning to Nam Hải, Trọng Thủy handed the golden toenail to his father. Triệu Đà was very happy and shouted: "This time Âu Lạc will be in my hands!" Sometime later Triệu Đà commanded his troops to invade Âu Lạc.

Hearing the reported news, An Dương Vương did not take precautions because he counted on the Deity's bow. Until the enemies approached very close to the Fortress, then An Dương Vương ordered to bring out the Deity's bow to shoot them, but it was not effective anymore.

The troops of Nam Hải broke the gate and flooded into the Fortress. Hurrily An Dương Vương mounted his horse, let Mỵ Châu behind his back, and rode away by the back gate. Sitting behind her father's back, Mỵ Châu plucked goose feathers from her coat and spread them along the road.

The mountainous road was bumpy and dangerous; the horse kept running several days and nights, then reached Dạ Sơn Mountain near the seashore. Both father and daughter planned to get down from the horse for a break, but the enemies pursued very close. Seeing that the serpentine road had a steep slope and there was no way to run anymore while the dusk was falling down, An Dương Vương looked towards the sea and prayed Deity Kim Quy to bless him. Right after his prayer, a very strong whirlwind twisted dust and sand all over the place, violently shaking the whole jungle and mountain. Deity Kim Quy appeared and said to An Dương Vương: "The enemy is behind your back!"

At that moment An Dương Vương realized
his mistake, at once he drew his sword and slashed Mỵ Châu; then he jumped into the sea. Deity Kim Quy cleaved the water and carried the King. Triệu Đà's troops entered and occupied Cổ Loa Fortress. During that time, only with his horse Trọng Thủy followed the goose feather trace to look for Mỵ Châu. Approaching the seashore, he found his wife's corpse on the grass, even though she was dead, her beauty did not fade. Trọng Thủy burst out crying, collected her corpse, and buried it inside Cổ Loa Fortress; then he jumped into a well to commit suicide.

At the present time, in Cổ Loa Village, in front of An Dương Vương's Temple, there is a well called Trọng Thủy Well. According to the legend, after Mỵ Châu had been killed by her father, her blood ran into the sea, and the oysters ate it and therefore

they produced pearls; if someone took this pearl and cleaned it with the water from the well in Cổ Loa Fortress, it would illuminate everything.

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6.

TRẦU CAU
BETEL & ARECA NUT

EXPLANATION =

Chewing betel & areca nut: In Vietnam, there has been a tradition or custom, actually a habit, of chewing betel and areca-nuts, plus a little slaked lime like Westerners chewing tobacco. However, since 1975, due to cleanliness and hygiene, very very few people have kept this habit; and maybe there will be no more people chewing betel and areca nuts after all old people have died within the next 30 years.

Milpa: a dry land to cultivate vegetables, squash, etc.

Once upon a time, there was a Quan Lang whose last name was Cao, having two sons whose ages were different only by one year, but they looked exactly the same so that outsiders of the family could not distinguish who was the older or younger brother. Their

parents died when they were eighteen and seventeen years of age. They loved each other very much and now in this orphaned situation they loved each other more than before.

With no more education from their father, they came to study with Taoist Luu. Both studied diligently and their behaviors were serious; therefore, their teacher loved them as his sons. He had a daughter, approximately sixteen or seventeen years old, who was so very pretty so that all girls in the area could not compare with her.

Seeing that the Cao brothers were both handsome and virtuous, the girl fell in love; she wanted to choose the elder to be her husband, but she did not know who was the older or younger one.

One day, on the occasion of cooking rice soup the girl took a bowl of soup, a pair of chopsticks, and invited both brothers. Seeing that the one yielded to the other she recognized who was the elder or younger. After that, the girl asked her parents' permission to marry the elder.

Since the older brother had married his wife, the love between the two brothers was not as much as before. The younger was very sad and the elder unintentionally ignored it.

One day both brothers went to the milpa; the younger came into the house first. He passed the doorstep, his sister-in-law ran out from the bedroom, misunderstanding him as her husband and hugging him in a hurry. The younger brother yelled out, both felt ashamed. Right at that moment the older brother came in and saw the scene. From that time on the elder suspected that his brother was having an affair with his wife so that the elder treated his brother differently than before.

One afternoon, both his brother and sister-in-law went out. The younger sat alone, watching the distant jungle and feeling solitary; diving more and more self-pity, he stood up and left the house.

He walked, kept walking towards the jungle in front of him; then he followed the track into the gloomy jungle. It began to darken; the moon already rose, but he still wandered. Getting to a brook which was broad, deep, and transparently green, he could not swim to the other side so that he reluctantly took a rest on the bank. He wept loudly;

the brook babbled and babbled constantly, drowning his crying. The night got colder and colder; its coldness absorbed his body slowly; he died but still keeping the sitting position and transformed into a slate of stone.

The older brother and his wife came back home. Not being able to find his younger brother, the elder regretted and quietly went to look for him without informing his wife. Also following the same rut, he walked, walked always, and finally he reached the transparently green brook that was running torrentially in the moonlight. He could not go over to the other side; so he had to sit on the brook bank reluctantly, leaning his body to a slab of stone. He did not realize that this slab was his younger brother! The fog fell regularly; the cold fog was dripping down from leaves. He cried sadly for a long time, passed out, and was frozen to death; then transformed into a tree without branch that rose straight next to the slate of stone.

At home, the wife did not find her husband anywhere; in a rush, she went to look for him and also followed the same rut into the jungle. She walked always, up and down; and at last, she also reached to the brook that was deep and transparently green. She could not go anymore. She sat and leaned against the root of a tree which had no branch next to a slab of stone, then she writhed and lamented. She did not realize that she already sat and leaned against her husband and next to him was her brother-in-law. She cried so much, but the brook sound was louder her crying. The night slowly passed to the morning; the fog fell down more and more and covered all the jungle, but she still writhed and lamented. It was not past midnight, she was already so skinny; her body changed trailingly long and transformed into a creeper twining round the tree without branch next to the slate of stone.

Lately, people heard this story and everyone felt pity for them. One day, King Hùng Vương passed by this area; people told him this three-person story and he went there to see. The King ordered to pick the leaf of the creeper and the fruit of the tree without branch and mashed them together, and they were smelt a little hot. Trying to chew them, the King felt their sweet taste, and when spitting their juice on the slate of stone, he saw the juice slowly changed its color into red.

Even though their love story had ended, their predestined affinity was still long-lasting; therefore, in all meeting occasions of the Vietnamese, a piece of betel was the thing to start a conversation for a good marriage; and whenever there has been small or big party, marriage engagement, or festivity, chewing betel has become a tradition of the Vietnamese race.

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7.

TÁO QUÂN

EXPLANATION

Táo Quân = Kitchen King
Táo Bà = Mrs. Táo = Kitchen Queen

In the old days, there was a very poor couple of woodcutter. The husband had a drinking habit. Whenever cutting then selling wood in the market and having some money he always got drunk. Then when getting home, he insulted and beat his wife and drove her from their home. In the beginning, the wife had tried to sustain the bad treatment. Later on, being oppressed too much, the wife had to run away.

She escaped to the jungle. She went astray for three or four days without any food. Being hungry and tired at her feet, and at night being worried to be pounced on by a tiger or panther, she was very suffered.

Fortunately, she saw a straw hut in front of her eyes. She came to knock at the door asking for a temporary stay. After telling her situation, the hunter agreed about her staying. For sometime later both had become husband and wife and they lived together very harmoniously.

After his wife left the house, there was nobody took care of his everyday meals. At that time he had regretted and swore that from now on he quit drinking. He made up his mind to seek his wife and to bring her back. He also went astray in the jungle a couple of days and then he saw a straw hut. On that day, the owner of the hut went out, only his wife stayed at home. The woodcutter knocked at the door for asking a temporary rest. Surprisingly he saw his wife inside. He cried and entreated of her for her return.

His wife also wept and moaned that:

- Oh my love, even though in the past you beat and drove me from our home, but I still love you very much…

They were talking, suddenly the wife saw that the hunter came back home, one hand with a hare, the other with his bow. Being panic-stricken the wife asked her former husband to hide in the heap of straw.

Getting to the door, the hunter spoke to his wife:

- Today I hunted a good hare. So you get the fire to burn the heap of straw in front of the house for grilling the prey. My sweetheart, remember to buy some liquor for drinking fun.

The wife had hesitated for while then burned the heap of straw. It flamed very fast and the woodcutter felt very hot but he did not dare to come out because he was afraid that the situation would be revealed. He struggled in agony for sometimes then died there.

Seeing that, the wife was very heartbroken. Then she jumped into the flame to commit suicide for completing her married love and duty.

Seeing his wife was dying, the hunter thought that he was doing something wrong against his wife, so he also jumped into the flame to die with her.

Lately, all three of them became Mr. and Mrs. Táo with their heads facing each other on the stove.

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8.

TẤM & CÁM

EXPLANATION =

Tấm = the older sister's name
Cám = the younger sister's name
Bụt = a kind of Buddha according to North Vietnamese people

Once upon a time, there were Tấm and Cám who were same-father half-sisters. Tấm was the first wife's daughter, and Cám, the second. Tấm's mother had died for a long time when Tấm was very young. One year later her father also died. Tấm lived with the stepmother who was a very harsh person. Day by day, Tấm had to work hard and very busy all day long to complete many chores, such as watching water buffaloes,

carrying buckets of water, cutting sweet potatoes, and picking up water-fern; at night she still had to unhash paddy, to grind rice but she never finished her tasks. At the same time, Cám was indulged by her mother, had good meals and beautiful clothes, loitered around the house, and did not have to do anything heavy.

One day the stepmother gave a basket to each of two sisters, asking them to go to the field to catch fish and shrimp. She promised: "Whoever caught them full of a basket will be rewarded a red bra."

In the field, owing to be used to catch crabs and shellfishes by feeling with her hands under the water, Tấm caught fish and shrimps, full of the basket; at the same time, Cám took her time to wander from field to field until noon but she still got nothing.

Seeing Tấm catching a full basket, Cám spoke to her older sister:

- Sister Tấm! Your head is dirty! You should go to the pond, dive deeply to rinse your head cleanly if not your stepmother will nag at you.

Thinking Cám's words were sincere, Tấm got into the pond, swam to the deep spot for bathing and washing. Taking advantage of this occasion, Cám shifted all fish and shrimp from Tấm's basket to hers then rushed to run back home first. After getting up from the pond and seeing her basket empty, Tấm sat down and held her face crying bitterly.

At that time Bụt was sitting on his lotus throne, suddenly hearing Tấm's crying, he appeared and asked:

- Why are you crying?

Tấm told him the circumstance. Bụt said:

- My dear child, stop crying now! Try to look in your basket to see anything left?

Tấm glanced at the basket then responded:

- Only a chub.

- You bring this chub and raise him in the well. Every meal instead of three you eat two bowls and save one for him. For each feeding time you remember to call him as follows:

Chub chub fine fine

Come up to eat my gold, silver rice
Do not eat other people's sour soup or rice.

If you do not call like that, he would not come up, my child, remember it!

Bụt disappeared after saying this. Tấm followed Bụt's direction and put the chub in the well. Since that day, Tấm saved her rice at every meal, hid and brought it to the well for the chub. Each time, hearing Tấm's calling, the fish moved up to the water surface, caught and ate Tấm's rice. She and the chub gradually knew each other, and the chub grew up very fast.

Noticing that Tấm often brought rice to the well after each meal, the stepmother suspected; then she asked Cám to be on the watch for Tấm. Lurking in the bush near the well and hearing Tấm's words calling the chub, she kept repeating until she memorized it; then she came back home to report to her mother.

That night the stepmother ordered Tấm to get up early for watching water buffaloes and said:

- My child! Our village is starting to forbid watching buffaloes in our village field. Tomorrow you must go to far fields, not in our fields if not village officials will confiscate our buffaloes.

Tấm followed the order: The next morning she brought the buffaloes eating in the very far distance. At home, Cám and her mother brought a rice bowl to the well and called the chub moving up to eat with the same words as Tấm did. Hearing the words, the firsh moved up to the water surface. Cám and her mother already prepared the net, caught the chub, brought and cooked him at home.

In the afternoon Tấm brought buffaloes back. After eating her meal, she brought the saved rice bowl to the well. She called and called but she did not see the chub as usual. She kept calling, calling, finally, she saw a piece of blood floating on the water. Knowing something bad happened, Tấm burst out crying. Bụt appeared again and asked:

- Why are you crying?

Tấm told the circumstance to Buddha. Buddha said:

- They already ate your chub. Stop crying,
my child! Then go home to collect his bones, find four jars and put them in there, and bury them under four legs of your bed.

Following Bụt's advice, Tấm went back home and looked for the chub's bones; she sought all corners of the garden and the front yard but she could not find anything. Seeing that, a chicken said to Tấm:

- Cuckoo, cuckoo! Give me a handful of paddy, I will dig the bones!

Tấm took a handful of paddy and spread it for the chicken. The chicken ran into the kitchen, dug for a while, and found the bones. Then Tấm collected them, put them in four jars, and burried them under the legs of her bed as told by Buddha.

For some time later the King opened a festival for some days and nights. All of the people old, young, female, and male of the villages were in an eager bustle going for the festival. On every street, all the people were in stylish clothes as a stream running toward the capital. Both mother and Cám also wore beautiful clothes for participating in the festival. Seeing that Tấm also wanted to go, the stepmother pouted and pursed her lips for a long time. Then she mixed half basket of rice with that of paddy and said to Tấm:

- You must completely pick this basket, then
you can go anywhere as you like; do not give up in the middle of the task; you will be beaten if I have nothing to cook when I come back.:

After saying, both mother and daughter had their clothes hanging loose on their bodies for departure. Tấm sat and pick for a while, she was on tenterhooks and thought that she would never finish the task; so she sat and cried alone. At that time Buddha appeared and asked:

- Why are you crying again?

Tấm showed the basket and said:

- My stepmother ordered me to pick the rice and paddy separately, then I may go to see the festival. When I finish the task, the festival is over and there is nothing to see.

Bụt said:

- Don't cry anymore. You bring the basket to the yard so that I order sparrows to pick for you.

- But if the sparrows eat rice, when my stepmother comes back I am still beaten.

- You tell them as follows:

Sparrows come down to pick for me

Eating any grain you will be beaten to death!

They would not dare to eat any of yours.

Tấm did as Bụt's direction. All of a sudden a flock of sparrows from the sky came down to the yard, picking rice and paddy separately. They worked in a rush and harmoniously and just a short while they completed the task, no grain was lost. But when the sparrows were gone, Tấm was again crying loudly. Bụt asked one more time:

- Why are you crying again?

- I am in rags, they would not let me come in to see the festival.

- You dig up the jars containing the chub's bones, then you will have everything for you to wear for the festival.

Listening to Bụt's words, Tấm went to dig the jars. In the first one, Tấm took out a dress, coat, bra, and scarf. There were a pair of embroidered shoes. Tấm saw a horse in miniature in the third jar; but when she put the horse on the ground, suddenly it neighed out loud and transformed into a real horse. In the fourth jar Tấm took out a pretty saddle also in miniature then it grew up bigger to fit with the horse.

Being so happy Tấm rushed to clean up, then she changed her clothes, and she mounted on the horse to drive off. The horse galloped for a while and reached the capital. But when the horse galloped through a muddy puddle, Tấm dropped one of her shoes into the water and she did not have the time to pick it again. When the horse stopped at the festival, Tấm bound the other shoe with her scarf; then she hustled in the midst of the sea of people.

At that time the King escort group got to the muddy puddle. Two royal leading elephants suddenly pitched their tusks on the ground, roared, and did not obey to move anymore. The King ordered his musketeers getting in the puddle to inspect if there would

have something; immediately they found Tấm's embroidered shoe dropped before. The King contemplated the shoe without boredom. He said to himself: "What a very beautiful shoe! The wearer must be a beauty queen."

At once the King ordered to announce for inviting all women and girls in the festival to try the shoe; if anyone whose foot fitted the shoe will be married by the king. The festival became more to be in an uproar because ladies and misses elbowed others out for getting to the place trying the shoe in the hope of good luck. In turn, all of them went into the hall in the middle of a large lawn for their lucks. But no foot fit it. Cám and her mother also were among them.

When Cám and the stepmother just got out of the hall, Cám saw Tấm; she informed her mother:

- Mom, it looks like Sister Tấm is also going to try on the shoe.

Tấm's stepmother pouted her lips:

- A fool:

"*Nobody eats even with a golden bowl*
Let alone a broken disk in the bamboo bush."

But when Tấm put her foot on the shoe; it fit exactly. She opened her scarf, took out the second shoe, and wore it. Both shoes looked the same. The musketeers shouted with joy. Immediately the King ordered a group of royal maids to escort her to the palace. Tấm got on the palanquin before the stepmother and Cám's surprised, jealous eyes.

Even though Tấm lived happily in the royal palace, she did not forget her father's memorial day. She requested the King for permission to go home for helping her stepmother on that day. Now, seeing that Tấm had returned, her stepmother's jealousy exploded. Thinking and having a deceptive trick, she said to Tấm:

- You used to climb the areca tree, let climb and bring down a bunch of areca nut to worship your dad.

Tấm obeyed and climb up the areca tree. When Tấm reached to the bunch of areca nuts, her stepmother held an ax to chop the root of the tree. Seeing the tree shaken violently, Tấm asked:

- What are you doing at the bottom?

- There are so many ants at the root, I drive them away so that they do not climb up to bite you.

But when Tấm had not torn the bunch, the areca tree fell down. Tấm fell upside down into the pond and died. In a hurry her stepmother took off Tấm's clothes and let her daughter wear them, then the latter told a lie to the King that Tấm, unfortunately, fell into the pond and was drown, now my mother offers me to replace my sister". Hearing that the King was not happy in his heart, but he said nothing.

After her death, Tấm was transformed into a yellow Skylark; she flew directly to the capital, landing on the royal garden. Seeing that Cám was washing the King's clothes, she stood on a branch and said to Cám:

- To dry my husband's shirts, you must dry them on the long drying stick, do not put them on the fence tearing my husband's shirts.

Then the skylark flew straight to the palace and perched on the window, singing joyfully to the ears. Wherever the King went, the skylark followed. Still missing Tấm and seeing the skylark always following him, the King said:

- Skylark, Skylark, if you are my wife, please flew into my hand of my long sleeved shirt.

The skylark followed the King's words. Immediately he ordered to build a gold cage for her to live. The King loved her so much; sometimes he forgot to eat and sleep. From that day, day and night the King was only interested in the skylark and did not think of Cám.

Cám was in a rush to go back home to tell the story to her mother. The latter asked her to kill and eat the skylark without hesitation, then to find a lie to tell the King. Returning to the palace and taking advantage of the King when he was out, Cám caught

the skylark, killed and ate her; then she buried the skylark's feathers in the garden. Realizing the skylark had disappeared, the King questioned Cám and she responded:

- Being pregnant, I have the urge to eat the meat of a bird, so without your permission, I already killed and ate the skylark.

Again the King said nothing. The skylark's feathers buried in the garden were transformed into two apple trees. When the King went to the royal garden, their branches and leaves bent down to form a shade, round as a parasol. The King saw that these trees were pretty with a big shade; he ordered his mandarin guards hanging a hammock for him to lie down and to enjoy the view and the shade. When the King left, the branch moved back, standing straight as usual. Since that time there was no day that the king did not lie down in the shade of these two apple trees.

Cám knew the situation and again she came back home to report to her mother. The latter told her to order a carpenter to chop down these two trees for making a loom, then to find something to lie to the King again. Returning to the palace, on the occasion of a storm, Cám ordered the carpenter to chop down these two apple trees; then they made a loom of them. Seeing that the trees were cut down, the King questioned and Cám responded:

- The trees fell down because of the storm, I ordered the carpenter to chop them to make a loom for weaving your shirts.

But after the loom was done, whenever sitting to weave Tấm always heard the curse of the loom:

Weaving, weaving
Robbing my husband
I take out your eyes.

Hearing that Cám was frightened; she rushed to go home for reporting to her mother. The latter told her to burn the loom, then to throw the ashes very far for peace in their hearts. Reaching to the palace, Cám did what her mother said. She brought the ashes to throw on the sidewalk distant from the royal palace.

The heap of ashes on the sidewalk transformed into a thị tree, tall with many branches and leaves. In the fruitful season, the tree had only one fruit, but its perfume spread everywhere. One day an old lady, selling tea nearby, passed by the tree, smelt the perfume, raised her head, and saw a thị fruit up high; then she held up her bag and said in low voice:

- Oh, thị, drop in my bag, I only smell your perfume, not eating.

The old lady just finished her words, thị fruit fell in the middle of her bag. She took loving care to bring the fruit home and to keep it in her room; sometimes she took it out, contemplated it and smelt its perfume.

The old lady went to the market every day.

When she already left her home, a girl whose body like a finger came out from thị fruit, however just on the blink she transformed to Tấm. Just coming out Tấm took the broom to sweep and wipe the house cleanly; and then she cooked rice, pickled vegetables, made soup to help the selling tea lady. After that Tấm was transformed back to her miniature form then sneaked into the fruit. Every time coming back home the old lady was very surprised because she saw the house was in order, the rice and soup were cooked.

One day the selling-tea lady pretended to go to the market; at halfway she sneakily came back home and was on the watch at the bush in the backyard. At that time Tấm came out from thị fruit; then she did her work at other times. Gingerly the old lady came to watch through the chink of the door. She was so happy while seeing a beautiful girl; all of a sudden she rapidly pushed the door for entering and tightly embraced Tấm… And after that, she tore the pericarp of thị fruit in pieces so that Tấm would have not been able to sneak back into it. From that moment Tấm stayed with the selling-tea lady; both loved each other as mother and daughter. Everyday Tấm helped her in cooking rice, steaming water, folding cakes, and making a quid of betel so the old lady could just sit to do the sales

One day the King went out of the royal palace. Seeing a clean selling-tea store, he stopped by. The old lady offered betel and tea to the King. Noticing that the betel was

made in Phoenix style, the King suddenly remembered the betel which his wife made before had been like this, so he asked:

- Who made this betel?

The old lady responded:

- My daughter made it!

- Where is your daughter? Call her to come out here for me to see.

The old lady called Tấm. She just appeared, but at once the King recognized his previous wife who was younger and more beautiful than before. The King was so happy and asked the old lady to tell the situation; then he commanded his mandarin guards to bring a palanquin to escort her to the royal palace.

Cám who saw Tấm came back and was loved by the king as before was very scared. One day Cám asked her sister:

- Oh, Sister Tấm! What do you do to be beautiful like that?

Tấm responded teasingly:

- Bathing with boiled water will have white skin, long hair, and will become younger and prettier.

Stupidly Cám ordered her guard to boil a very big pan of water; then she jumped in and died without having time to leave her last recommendations.

Tấm ordered to make a salty pickled food with Cám's corpse; then they put it in a big jar and sent it to the stepmother, saying that it was her daughter's gift. Thinking it was true, Cám's mother took out the food and ate; and at every meal, she always praised it as delicious. A crow from somewhere perched on the roof of her house crowd as follows:

Deliciously, deliciously! Mother eats her daughter's meat, please give me a piece if there is something left.

With rage Cám's mother reviled it loudly; then she took a perch to chase it away. But when the food was almost finished, while looking at the bottom of the jar she saw her daughter's skull, fell down suddenly and died.

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9.

TRƯƠNG CHI & MỴ NƯƠNG

Once upon a time, there was a king's first premier having a daughter named Mỵ Nương who was unsurpassable in beauty. She lived in a forbidden palace near the river.

At that time there was a young fisherman named Trương Chi who had an ugly pock-marked face and everyday he came to that river section to cast a nest for his living. At night he played the recorder for his entertainment. The sound of the flute which was super excellent caused Mỵ Nương who stayed in the upper floor of the palace fell in love with the music and also with the recorder player's distant appearance.

But some time later Trương Chi cast his nest in another section. Without hearing the recorder and seeing appearance, Mỵ Nương began to be deeply sad. She was in a state of anxious suspense to wait for them every night. However, there were no flute sound and his appearance. And she began to be broken-hearted and was sick, in a coma, not being able to leave her bed.

In a rush, the premier had called several good oriental doctors coming, diagnosing, and giving prescriptions so many times but her sickness did not reduce. Lately, the

premier had interviewed My Nương's maids and found out that his daughter had lovesickness

Trương Chi was ordered to visit My Nương while she was comatose. While sitting to wait for the medicine to be ready, Trương Chi played the recorder to entertain everybody and himself. Hearing the music My Nương was slowly out of the coma and seemed to get well suddenly. But when My Nương saw Trương Chi's face, all of a sudden she was not lovesick anymore and she showed a frigid attitude toward Trương Chi; and Trương Chi was sad and left.

But from that time Trương Chi secretly fell in love with My Nương. He who felt self-pity for his poverty and low class, sad and discouraged did not care about working and living anymore. Then one day he lamented:

We are in an inconclusive love affair in this life
So we will be together in the next life.

Then jumped into the river to commit suicide.

Trương Chi died, but his soul entered into a gum-top tree floating in the river. Sometime later someone picked up the tree and unintentionally sold it to the premier. Buying a precious wood, the premier immediately ordered a carpenter to lathe it into a set of the teacup.

One day My Nương hold a cup to pour it with tea, strangely the picture of Trương Chi rowing a boat appeared in the cup. Right away the recorder music resounded slightly as it lamented and reproached for something. My Nương was affected by it and she recalled her past love. A drop of her tears fell into the cup and it was melted into water.

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10.

TIÊN DUNG & CHỬ ĐỒNG TỬ

EXPLANATION

Triệu Việt Vương = King of Vietnam (from 549-571 A.D)
Bãi Tự Nhiên = Natural Ground
Đầm Nhất Dạ = One-Nigh Marsh
Nhà Lương = Lương Dynasty in China

In the old times, in the village of Chử Xá, there was a father named Chử Cù Văn and his son named Chử Đồng Tử who were very poor to such an extent that they had only one loin-cloth which one of them could wear when he had to go somewhere. Cù Văn was seriously sick; before going to die, he expressed his deadbed wish to his son that:

- When I die, you just bury me without clothes, then you keep the loin-cloth for wearing.

Cù Văn died, but Chử Đồng Tử did not have the heart to bury his father nakedly; so he put the loin-cloth on his father's corpse; then he buried him. Living in a shanty near the river, everyday Chử Đồng Tử came down into the river to catch fish; then he exchanged them for rice with other people on the boat passing by.

At that time there was a princess named Tiên Dung who had an unsurpassable beauty, seventeen or eighteen years of age, but she did not accept to marry anyone and she liked roaring, going on the boat to contemplate mountains and rivers. The King pampered his daughter, providing a boat and all kinds of servants, allowing her to go wherever she wanted.

One day, Tiên Dung took a trip on the river; Tiên Dung's boat was in the middle, between soldiers' and maids' boats. When their boats which were in river section of Chử Xá Village made a big shade on the river surface. Seeing that, in a rush, Chử Đồng Tử threw his net in the bush, ran to the river shore, and dug the sand for hiding; then he covered his body with sands.

Seeing that the river shore was wide and there were some big bushes soothingly shading, Tiên Dung liked it and ordered the boats stopped over; then she chose a shaded place and asked her maids covering four directions with curtains for bathing. Tiên Dung got inside curtains, took off her clothes, and poured down the water with satisfaction. Incidentally the place where Tiên Dung covered with curtains was Chử Đồng Tử's hiding spot. Tiên Dung bathed for a while and suddenly Chử Đồng Tử emerged. Seeing him in startle, she questioned the reason and Chử Đồng Tử answered that because without clothes, he was afraid when he saw the soldiers and officers' boats so that he had to hide in the sand.

Tiên Dung said to Chử Đồng Tử that:

- I swore not to marry, but now there is a predestined love tie that I meet you here, so I should not go against God's will.

She asked Chử Đồng Tử to bath and clean up carefully, got clothes for him to wear, accompanied him to the boat, and commanded maids to prepare a wedding night feast. Knowing that Chử Đồng Tử expressed his words of refusal. But Tiên Dung said to him that:

- God himself may marry you and me, why should we refuse?

Reluctantly Chử Đồng Tử agreed. From that day they became husband and wife.

Hearing such news, the King got upset, ordered all Tiên Dung's soldiers and servants to come back. Even though Tiên Dung was afraid of her father, but she stayed with her husband and looked for ways to earn a living. Day by day her business was prosperous; gradually where they lived became a quarter. Lately someone advised her to send people to the sea finding something strange, bringing it back for exchange of other things. She listened and let her husband go.

Chử Đồng Tử passed by a place extraordinarily beautiful; he looked up and saw a small temple. He climbed up the montain and met a Buddhist monk named Phật Quang. Seeing that Chử Đồng Tử was a sincere, honest person, Phật Quang wanted to hand down his miracle to him. Chử Đồng Tử did not think about going to the sea anymore. After one year of training and learning, Phật Quang gave him a walking stick and a hat, permitted him to go down the mountain, and reminded him that:

- The miracle is in this stick and hat.

Chử Đồng Tử came back home and instructed her what magic he had learned. After that the couple left the village, looking for a quiet place to stay. One day, on the way, it was nightfall but they did not reach a residential area. They stood the stick on the ground, put the hat on its top for covering the fog then sat next to each other for sleeping. It was past midnight when the couple woke up, they saw that they were in a sumptuous palace, having all tables and chairs, chests and beds, draperies and curtains, and also young servants, maids, and soldiers back and forth tumultuously in the lobby. In the next morning, going outside to check the couple saw a fortified wall surrounding the palace and there were so many sentries like on a big fortress.

The strange news came to the royal court. The King who assumed that Chử Đồng Tử and Tiên Dung were rebels immediately commanded his generals and soldiers coming to wipe them out. When the royal forces approached where the couple lived, it was just dark and they could not cross the river. At midnight, there was a storm in which the sand fled, trees fell down and the whole area of Chử Đồng Tử and Tiên Dung took off to the sky, only an empty ground was left in the middle of the marsh. Laterly that place was called Bãi Tự Nhiên and that marsh, Đầm Nhất Dạ. Seeing the supernatural matter, the people constructed a little temple to worship right on the bank of the marsh.

Later on, after many generations, Triệu Việt Vương held his forces in the march to fight against the aggressive forces of the Lương Dynasty. When his forces was urgently surrounded, the King ordered to establish a worshipping platform and prayed God helping him to destroy the enemies for the sake of his country. Suddenly a God who

mounted on a dragon came down to the platform, gave to Triệu Việt Vương a claw, and told him: "You stick this claw on the top of your hat so that whenever you go, the enemies will be disintegrated". Finishing his words, God mounted on the dragon and took off fast to the sky.

Following God's instruction, Triệu Việt Vương felt his strength increasing greatly, his mind was also clear-sighted, his reputation improved day by day; then he led his forces to break the enemy encirclement and chopped Dương San, a rival general. The aggressive forces of the Lương Dynasty were dissipated and they had to withdraw from the Vietnamese territory at that time.

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11.

CUỘI

EXPLANATION

Cuội = the boy/guy named Cuội

In the old times, there was a little boy named Cuội. He was an intelligent boy, but he used his intelligence to lie. He really enjoyed duping the people around him. Nobody could avoid being duped by him, even his uncle and aunt-in-law who brought him to their home for raising since his parents passed away.

One day his uncle went to plow in a distant field while his aunt-in-law was busy at home. Cuội thought of a lying joke for teasing both of them. He ran directly to the field where his uncle was plowing. Just reaching to the field, he yelled sensationally:

- Oh, Uncle! Uncle! You must come home right away! Aunt-in-law fell from the ladder, there were a lot of blood, I don't know what to do.

Without speaking any word, he uncle darted toward home. Cuội followed a short cut to reach home before him. Jumping into the house, Cuội screamed loudly:

- Oh, Aunt! Aunt! Uncle was hit by the water buffalo. It seems that its horn thrust into his belly. You should go fast, if not he dies!

Cuội just finished his words, his aunt-in-law already ran out of the house. Cuội looked and laughed delightedly.

His aunt-in-law sped so fast but she was still afraid to be late. And then when she who exactly got to the curved spot bumped into someone who turned out to be her husband was being out of breath and sweating heavily. Both looked at each other and were indescribably happy. Both understood at once that they were duped by the nephew. They flew into a rage. The uncle said:

- From now on, definitely, we would not be duped by this little devil anymore.

The couple came back home and found Cuội was hiding in the back of the house. Both put him inside a big lattice basket made of bamboo, and the lit was securely tightened. His uncle threatened:

- Stay there until it's dark. Then your aunt and I will bring this basket to the river and throw it into the water so that you won't be able to lie anymore!

In the late afternoon, his uncle and aunt-in-law pretended carried the basket to the river. When they got to the riverbank, Cuội cried out:

- Oh, my Uncle and Aunt! I clearly understand that I am guilty. I am ready to be punished. But would you please give me a last grace? I have a book instructing how to lie which was secretly hidden behind the paddy storage in the house. Today I want to bring it along for reading in hell.

While Cuội sat inside the basket in waiting,
there was a blind man groped about his way along the riverbank.

- Oh, blind man! Blind man! If you want to
see things, then come here!

Hearing that, the blind man groped about his way to the basket. Cuội hurried him:

- Come on, fast, faster! You unleash this basket, then I will show you how to cure your blindness.

The blind man touched by feeling with his hands around the basket and finally he found a way to open the lid. When it was just unleashed, Cuội jumped out and ran away.

When his uncle and aunt-in-law came back to the riverbank to tell him that they hadn't found the book anywhere, the kid was not in the basket anymore. There was only a pitiful blind man standing and waiting to learn how to cure his eyes out of blindness. His uncle and aunt-in-law were mad themselves to be deceived one more time.

Cuội ran to thick bamboo bushes on the riverbank. While wandering around these bushes, luckily he found an antique jar full of gold. Immediately Cuội brought the gold jar to his uncle and aunt-in-law.

Owing to the gold jar, his uncle and aunt-in-laws' family became rich. At that time his uncle and aunt-in-law understood that his nephew's character could not be changed even though how much they reproached him. They thought about to get for him a good wife, so that perhaps he would stop to lie and to avoid bad habit of having nothing to do. Therefore, Cuội was married by them with a girl in the same village. It seemed that for the time between the engagement and wedding ceremonies, Cuội lied less; but some months later after the death of his aunt-in-law, Cuội continued again to lie and dupe everyone as before.

One day, Cuội wandered in the jungle and suddenly found some tiger puppies lying on the grass. To be bad by nature, Cuội took these puppies and broke their legs. Being hurt badly, they cried and immediately Cuội heard the frightening roar from some place close by. Cuội thought himself: "Definitely their mother!" In a rush, he hid

behind a bush. A moment later, the tigress appeared. When she heard her puppies crying, she took them one by one to the root of a young tree, full of branches and green leaves. She tore some leaves, chewing them to pieces, and then put them on their broken legs. It took only some minutes, the tiger puppies' wounds were healed. Cuội was extremely surprised.

Cuội was on the watch until the tigress and her puppies were gone; then he dug and carried the tree to his home. He planted it in his yard and named it "cây đa." Since then, Cuội took care of it very carefully. He said to his wife that a deity gave him this tree whose leaves could cure many wounds and all other sicknesses, and also it would be able to revive people. Cuội reminded his wife keeping the tree always to be very clean; many times he threatened his wife:

- I forbid you to throw garbage at the root of the tree, if not it will fly away!

From the beginning, Cuội's wife followed his instructions. But later on, she was gradually tetchy with him because she felt Cuội showing more affection for the tree than his wife. Consequently, one day there was a quarrel over the tree, she could not control herself and yell loudly:

- I will just throw the garbage at the root of the tree if I want to!

Upsetting she carried a basket full of garbage from the kitchen and threw the whole thing at the root of the tree, making a big noise. All of a sudden the tree began to tremble, then slowly its roots emerged from the soil and the whole tree rose from the ground

Seeing that, Cuội darted to the tree, tightly held one of its roots. But the tree just continued to take off. It just fled up to the sky with Cuội holding its root. The tree kept flying, flying up to the moon and stood there ever since. As a result, if viewing the moon carefully people can see "cây đa" up there with Cuội sitting at the root, especially when the sky is clear, bright in the full moon period.

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12.

THE MERCURY SCALE

In the old days there were a couple, earning their income by bying and selling, schemed to divise an empty scale which they put mercury inside, both heads were sealed with copper, so nobody knew that was a cunning scale. In buying they tilted the bar scale to the disk scale; in selling they titlted the bar scale to the holding hook. As a result, the couple always got the benefit.

Because of such cunning buying and selling, they became rich very fast. God also granted them to have two handsome, intelligent sons, progressing in studying; everybody commended that they had the luck.

One of those days, the couple discussed and
decided that they should destroy the cheating scale for leaving their virtue to their children later on. Then they brought the scale to smash. Strangely there was no more mercury inside, but only a red blood clot. Both was frightened; then they proceeded a repentance ceremony and they tried to do charitable act everyday.

Not too long later, both of their sons suddenly fell down and died one by one. The couple suffered extremely and cried tragically. They realized they have done wrong things and therefore God and Buddha punished them like that. But it was too late, the couple just moaned for themselves, not daring to reproach God or the Earth.

One night in their dreams the couple saw
Bụt appeared and told them:

- Your two sons were originally demons. In the past, seeing that you did bad things God ordered these two demons reincarnating to be your sons for ruining your unrighteous wealth. But since you knew how to avoid bad things and to follow good deeds by destroying the mercury scale and doing virtuous acts, God and Buddha comprehended your sincerity; therefore, they recalled these two demons to come back. Do not grieve over them. Just live righteously; the God will give two other sons to you so that you can depend on them.

Since then the couple did not grieve over the death of their sons anymore, proceeded the repentance ceremony again, and continued to do charitable works with their best efforts. As a matter of fact, recently they had two other sons, not handsome, but mild, intelligent, remembering what they learned, and showing their filial piety toward their parents very well.

When they grew up, both passed their examinations to be mandarin officers and showed their filial diety to their parents at their best. In their old age the business couple had a leisurely life, being happy and respected by the people close by or in the distance. At that time, they just understood that God and Buddha were very fair; a bad action which was hidden how secretly still could not avoid a bad consequence before one's eyes. Luckily, owing to their early repentance they lived leisuredly, happily in their old age.

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13.

LƯU BÌNH & DƯƠNG LỄ

Once upon a time there were two very close friends named Lưu Bình and Dương Lễ who studied with the same teacher. Lưu Bình was rich and did not have the patience to study well; therefore, he failed his examination all the time while Dương Lễ passed his to be a mandarine officer even though he was very poor.

At that time the country was not in peace,
Lưu Bình's family fell into poverty day by day. He became poor, living a difficult life. One day he came to Dương Lễ's official residence, expecting his old close friend's help. Dương Lễ tried to keep a frigid attitude, ordering his servant to lay a regular meal on the tray for Lưu Bình. Encounting that slight, Lưu Bình was upset, left, and made up his mind to attain office and fame for
his revenge in the future.

On his way Lưu Bình met Châu Long, a beautiful girl, who voluntarily helped and fed him while he took care of his studies. She also promised to marry him when he became famous.

Some years passed: In a very small, divided house, on this side by himself Lưu Bình read books, recited poems, studied and reviewed his classics and history for the future examination; at the same time, on the other side of the house, Châu Long's monotonous sound of silk thread spinning seemed to encourage him to study diligently in a happy atmosphere.

Not a long time later, Lưu Bình passed his examination with high grade. In a rush he returned to his old house in order to inform his good news to Châu Long and to discuss their real marriage. But, alas! She already left. Therefore, he was in a hurry to come back to the capital and by the way he stopped by at Dương Lễ's residence.

While entering his old friend's residence,
he was very surprised to see Châu Long who came out to welcome him heartily. Lưu Bình asked her and knew that Châu Long was Dương Lễ's wife, and he understood that in the past Dương Lễ pretended to look down on him so that he got upset and tried to

study hard for the examination, then his friend ordered his wife to take care of him until his success, that meant his friend had a sincere willingness to help him to become a good person.

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14.

GOLDEN HEART

Once upon a time in a village along the Đà River there was a man very rich, greedy, dishonest, and cruel.

One day, in December evening, there was a very old lady, in rags, coming from nowhere, who entered the village. She came to the rich man's house and asked for an overnight stay. Seeing the weak, ragged, old woman, he drove her away, not wanting her to stay. The old lady kept begging, but he firmly expelled her from his house. She left reluctantly.

Just passing the gate, the old woman met a peasant coming from the distance. Seeing a weak, old person walking in a dark, cold night, he asked:

- Old lady, where are you coming from and why you are still wandering on the road like this?

She answered:

- I came from far away; I'm on my way; I just came out from that house (she was pointing to the rich man's residence) because he refused to let me stay overnight.

He said right away:

- I would invite you come to my home for a temporary stay.

The old woman followed the peasant to his home. His house was a ranky, torn shack. After entering it, he told the story from the beginning to the end to his wife. In the house there was only a bowl of rice, they cooked it for her.

After she had finished her meal, the couple prepared the mat and bed for her. Because of the cold wind in the winter, the old lady trembled uncontrollably. They gave their own blanket to her even though there was only one. The old lady got into the bed.

Sitting by the side of stove for its heat, the couple waited until the old woman was sleeping well, then they got to their bed. But, when they had just lain down and had not closed their eyes, the lady moaned, crying because of stomach upset. The couple had got up and brought a grazed terra-cotta pot for her to empty her bowls. Just in that night the old woman went to stool seven or eight times. In turn they had to hold her up everytime.

Near dawn, the couple had been very tired and they slept without knowing. When they woke up, the sun rose high; they had looked at the close-by bed and did not see the old woman anymore. Holding the pot for going to empty it, the wife felt it extraordinarily heavy; therefore, she looked down at it and found full of glittering gold.

Since then the couple became rich. However, they did not forget their past poverty; therefore, with all their hearts they still helped someone in a really poor situation.

Their good reputation spread far away; all over the region everybody knew it. Intentionally the rich man paid a visit to the couple's house and asked for information.

Both of them sincerely told him the old lady story in the past. Since that time, everyday he always wished to meet again the old woman.

Suddenly one day, it was almost dark; from nowhere the old woman came to his house to beg again for an overnight stay. He rejoiced inwardly and was so happy. There were so many rooms in his house, but he let her stay in the kitchen; in terms of rice he had many granaries, but he gave her just a cold bowl of rice with sour egg-plants because in the past he had never given anything to anyone; therefore, he thought that was a lavish treat for a poor person.

In that night he sat and waited for her to go to stool and make some gold. He stayed up very late, but he still saw her sleeping very quietly. So exhausted, he gave up and went into his bedroom. When he put down his back on the bed, the old lady moaned because of stomach upset; then a moment later she asked to empty her bowels. Forgetting his advanced plan, in the state of half sleep he yelled at the old woman:

- Oh damned thing, you are just a nuisance. Go out there for it, nobody serves you!

But later he suddenly remembered the old lady had a stomach full of gold; therefore, he said in a hurry:

- OK! Just lie there, I will bring a bucket for you.

Then he rushed to go and get a big pail and hurried her to go into it. She moaned throughout the night and went to the stool as someone opened a sewer. All night he could not sleep and just wished the day coming sooner. But when the dawn was going to begin, he slept like a dead person.

When it was full daylight, the rich man had awakened and did not see the old woman. He rushed to the big pail which she went to stool in all night long yesterday, the very stinking smell exhaled terribly. His face turned really pale; he went to hunt the old lady with a fierce intention to beat her up, but he could not find her anywhere.

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15.

SHARPEN THE KNIFE TO TEACH HIS WIFE

In the old times there was a country man very mild and kind, but unfortunately he married a wife extremely untruthful and fiendish.

In the house there was an old mother who was austere and talkative. Therefore, the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law quarrelled most of the time, rarely they were getting along and joyful with each other

Seeing that, the husband was very annoyed and discouraged, he already paid attention to them very much. When the wife was not at home, he gave some explanations and consolations to his mother; when the mother was out of the house he tried his best to admonish his wife in the hope of creating a harmonious family so that everyone could enjoy the family happiness.

Unexpectedly he wasted his time and acted in vain. The more the sky did not accept the earth, the more the earth did not agree with the sky: The mother-in-law said one word, the daughter-in-law talked ten of that. There was no concord in the house and day by day tumult increased tumult as well as discomfort. Both sides were incompatible; they vehemently opposed each other. As a result, only the husband in the middle suffered;
therefore, he thought of a stratagem as follows.

One day he went to the market, bought a very big round carving-knife, and he constantly sharpened and stropped it. The wife was surprised and asked why. But he did not answer and kept sharpening and stropping; then he put it away. Some days later he brought it out, sharpened and stropped it again. The wife asked why and he made up his mind, not to say anything.

He decided to say to his wife only after she asked three to five times:

- I sharpen this knife with the intention that I kill Mom whenever there is an opportunity. Honey, think that Mom now is already old, she will be dead soon or later; it does not matter what she wants, she dies only once. If we let her live, today she talks loudly to you, tomorrow she quarrels with you, the day after tomorrow she picks you out for hostile criticism. Even though you are in her daughter-in-law status, you would not accept that, and trouble begets trouble. Consequently both sides are discontented with and fight against each other so that the neighbors insult me. I cannot take it. I plan to kill Mom in an attempt to enjoy life with you and we can have good times.

The husband said that for while, so the wife had thought, then she regretted it after thinking about it. Since then the wife changed her character, also her behavior toward her mother-in-law without stubbornness as before.

Recognizing that, the husband was pleased and waiting some time later, the husband brought the knife to sharpen again. He sharpened, again and again, then he tried it two, three times. Seeing it, the wife was worried with fear and trembled uncontrollably. A moment later, the husband called the wife and said:

- Today I must kill Mom right now!

Then he went straightly away near to where his mother lying down as he was going to really kill her. The wife got scared, rushed to run after him and hold the husband's hands and said:

- Oh, I beg you hundred times, thousand

times; all are my faults, not your old mother. Please do not do that, so our Mom is not a victim of injustice. From now on I correct myself and I promise that there will not be any loud word againt our Mom.

Then, as a result, from that day there were concord and joy in the house; the daughter-in-laws treated the mother-in-law better than her own daughter.

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16.

THE LADY OF NAM XƯƠNG

In olden times there was a beautiful girl named Thanh Nương who had the husband named Trương Hạo. Both lived together in harmony and happiness, and they had a little son named Tùng. Then, when the country had rebels the husband had to leave for his man's duty. Thanh Nương stayed home, worked in order to feed her mother-in-laws and their too young son.

Not very long time later, her mother-in-law. Their home was more desolate. The more growing up the more her little son was cute. Many a time he babbled in question "Where is my dad?" Thanh Nương answered that his father went to work in the distance and he was be back soon.

There was a night in which Little Tùng
missed his father and he cried loudly and constantly even though his mother tried to calm him down. Thanh Nương held her son in her abdomen in choking with emotion and

understanding; she looked at the wall and saw her shadow reflected on it; so she thought of a way to comfort him by calling Little Tùng, pointing her finger to the wall and saying:

- There your dad already comes back.

Little Tùng was happy and stopped to cry. Then every night he played with the shadow on the wall which he called "dad" and slept very well.

The time went by very fast. There was no more rebellion. Trương Hạo returned to Nam Xương to reunite his wife and son. The couple had mixed feelings about happiness and self-pity in their reunion. Trương Hạo could not stop to understand his wife who tried to raise their child who spoke completely.

At that time, Thanh Nương had to go to the market to buy food; she gave Little Tùng to her husband to carry. After she left, the little boy cried, refused his carrying, and said that he "is not his dad."

Trương Hạo was surprised; he sweetly soothed and asked Little Tùng at the same time:

- If I am not your dad, so who is he?

Little Tùng spoke in susurrant voice:

- My dad often came here. Every night my dad always came here to play with me till very late, till I was sleepy.

Trương Hạo suspected his wife having an love affair when he was not home; therefore, there was a man coming here to play with Little Tùng at night.

Thanh Nương came back from the market; seeing that her husband's mien was not happy, she asked. Then Trương Hạo got angry, lashed out at her most shockingly, and planned to kick her out of the house. At that time Thanh Nương knew that her husband suspecting her having a love affair while the husband was not home.

She thought that faithfulness is the first quality of a married woman; but it is very ashamed when her husband accused her of cheating; only the death can prove her being a

victim of an injustice. As a result she went to bank of a river and jumped down to commit suicide.

The whole village knew the news, sought and pulled her corpse up. It was still fresh and her mien was normal; everyone commiserated with her.

One night, Little Tùng who was sitting in his father's lap suddenly pointed his finger to the wall and yelled loudly:

- There, my dad came over there.

Trương Hạo looked on the wall, seeing his own shadow reflecting the light of the oil lamp. At that time he knew clearly the cause and he regretted very much for his unjust suspicion to his wife.

Everything was too late, what did he had to do? Trương Hạo brought his son to the bank, displayed offerings to clear her, a faithful wife, of a false accusation.

According to the legend, Thanh Nương died and became a fairy, coming to inform her husband in his dream. Commiserating on her faithfulness example, the villagers built a temple to worship Thanh Nương on the river bank the so-called Nam Xương Lady's Temple.

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17.

THE DOG MADE OF STONE

EXPLANATION

Thiên Tào = a God taking care of the Earth affairs

In the past there was a student who went to his teacher's house had to pass a place where there was a dog made of stone. It was strange that the dog did not move when everyone passed by, but everytime the student came it sat up suddenly, expressing its happiness.

The student could not hold his surprise; therefore, one time he stopped immediately and asked the dog:

- Many people came by here, why weren't you happy, but you are only for me?

The dog answered:

- There will be a lot of those people participating in this exam, but only you will pass; that is God's will; so I am happy for you.

Hearing that the student was so pleased, and he told his parents about it when he came back home. Since then, suddently the father held his head high and he was conceited and haughty, and bullied everyone.

There was one time that the father led his water buffaloes for ploughing fields; he let them step on the villager's rice seedlings. People said something, but he did not care to answer. The next day, he brought more water buffaloes to crush their fields terribly. A field owner reproached him; he glowered his eyes, shook his hands and legs violently, and threatened:

- Pay attention! My son passes this exam, you will be in big trouble with me.

Hearing that the owner was confused and worried; therefore he had to let everything go. The next day the student came by the place where the dog of stone sat,

but he did not see it sit up suddenly and waggle its tail to show happiness. When he came back it was still not happy. Surprisingly the student asked it:

- Every other times I came by, you saw me

and you were happy, why not today, did I do something wrong?

The dog made of stone answered:

- This was not caused by you, but your

father who held his head high, threatened this one, and oppressed the other; therefore Thiên Tào erased your name. You will not pass this exam, so why should I express my happiness to you?

After hearing the dog made of stone said that, the student was so sad, came back home, and told his parents. The father regretted; since that time he did not dare to hold his head up anymore.

For his own part, the student did not pass that exam even though he was a very good student and did his best. Feeling heart broken, he carried his tent and sedge mat to come back, waiting until the next exam.

The next and the next after next exam, he still failed. At that time his parents then realized the God's justice was very fair; consequently they tried their best to cultivate virtues and accumulate moral deeds and to be very kind to everyone.

One day, the student passed by the place of the dog made of stone. All of a sudden he sat up, happily looking at him. He did not ask anything yet, but the dog said:

- Now your father knows to regret, correct

himself, and do charitable works; as a result, Thiên Tào already put your name on the new passing candidates' ledger; I congratulate you.

Evidently the student passed at the top of the exam. Returning his village, he was lavishly welcome. When the procession passed by the place of the dog made of stone, it disappeared without a trace.

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18.

NGŨ HÀNH SƠN

EXPLANATION

Ngũ hành = the five basic elements (metal, wood, water, fire, earth) according to Eastern philosophy
Sơn = Mt./mount/mountain
Long Quân = Dragon King
Tứ Quý = Four Seasons or Four Precious Things
Quảng Nam = a province in the Center of Vietnam, located in the south of Hue and in the north of Nha Trang
Thủy Sơn = Mt. Water

Once upon a time, there was an old man living by himself in a small shack in a dessert. The people who lived in the near neighborhood did not know that what he came here for and when did he come?

One day, suddenly in the open sea there was an area where waves raised high and the wind blew violently, making the sky dark. After a long moment there was a giant dragon advancing to the land. The dragon writhed on the beach. The wind blew very strong; dust and sand covered the view. The old man's shack was almost tumbled.

Finally the dragon screamed terribly, then from her belly a big egg appeared next to the old man's shack. After giving birth, the dragon crawled back to the sea and disappeared.

A moment later, in turn from the open sea a golden tortoise wiggled up. The tortoise dug the ground to hide the egg under the sand. Then, the tortoise came in front of the old man and said:

- I am Deity Kim Quy. I want you to try your best to protect this blood of Long Quân!

The old man responded:

- Having no more strength and skill as I how can I protect it?

The golden tortoise immediately gave him a toenail and said:

- Take this, whenever there is an urgent trouble, put it at your ear, I help right away, don't worry about anything.

One day, there was a running buffalo cart with some fierce soldiers on it. The old man was scared and worried because the cart was darting toward the egg's direction. He stood up and shook his hands signaling them for changing their direction, but it was in vain. Hurriely he put the tortoise's toenail at his ear. All of a sudden there was very low voice enough coming into his ear: "Lie down! Lie down!" Just bending down, he was transformed into a big tiger. The soldiers on the cart were panicked and turned their cart back.

After that, the old man took his shack to pieces and carried the material to cover the dragon's egg. But he had not realized that the dragon's egg was always bigger. At first, it made the sand to move up. Then, one or two days later it emerged from the sand. Each time like that, the old man was absorbed in taking the sand to cover up. But he wasted his labor because tomorrow and the day after tomorrow it emerged higher and higher, it even pushed his whole shack up.

The more the egg was bigger the more the old man felt weaker. However, he still tried his best for the dragon's egg. He went to chop trees and collected leaves to cover the egg up.

But then trees and leaves could not cover it anymore because the egg grew. It did not emerge from the sand to the sky only, but also grew widely. Its shell had many colors (blue, red, purple, and yellow) and it sparkled as a colossal pearl.

One day, his shack was burned by scoundrels. He entreated help from the tortoise's toenail. Immediately a cavern already furnished with bed and sedge mat appeared in the yolk of the egg; he just lay down and slept like a log because of extreme tiredness. At that time, from the yolk a female infant was born, lying next to his bed.

The milk from the stalactite fed the little girl who grew up fast by leaps and bounds. Even though the old man slep as dying, the little girl was not lonely. Everyday there were monkeys bringing fruits for her to eat and tigrine dove carrying cotton to weave her clothes.

The old man woke up and very surprised to see a beautiful girl sitting next to him. The girl exclaimed:

- During the past fifteen years I had listened to your regular breath. Now you already woke up, I am so happy.

The old man was dazed to see that now the deity egg already became a mountain, surrounded by dense trees, where birds and animals came to live lively. The tortoise's toenail was still at the head of the bed. In a hurry he took and put it on his ear. The tortoise's toenail gave directions to him and the girl to get out of the cavern and told them what they had to do.

Since then, the old man also had the responsibility to educate Long Quân's daughter. Birds and wild animals hung on next to them. Then, boys watching cows and domestic animals did came back and forth to get acquainted with them.

One day, there was a group of soldiers coming from nowhere whose faces were ferocious;they drew their dazzlingly bright swords, encircled and wanted to take over the new mountain. They planned to abduct children and old persons, but the tortoise's toenail used its supernatural power to kill these bad people instantly: the whole circle of fire massed and surrounded them.

Seeing that suddenly the mountain and people appeared in the locality, the people in the vicinity considered it was an unprecedented strange thing; so they believed that there were fairies who came down to this world to help people and they came in groups to meet the old man and the girl in order to ask medicine and to beg for all things. Realizing that they needed medicine, the girl took pieces of blue, red, glittering and bound them together, then she threw them around the sitting place. All of a sudden on the ground a kind of tree whose flowers having 5 petals to cure malaria efficiently. They competed to pluck this kind of flower. They called it Tứ Quý Flower. Day by day the rumor spread widely. Everybody mentioned about the little fairy with an effectionate heart.

After that, before long the King heard the news about the beautiful fairy; then he commanded the officer and soldiers carrying presents to propose marriage for the prince. When the messenger came to the place, they saw an old man and a young girl were playing a kind of chess named "gánh" on a big rock. The messenger came in and presented presents and the king's letter. While the old man was perplexed about what to do, the deity tortoise appeared and informed that Long Quân already accepted the offer of marriage.

Since then, there was no more fairy on the mountain. The girl already said good-bye to her adopted father and got on the palanquin, going along with the messenger and some hundreds of escorting soldier. And the old man returned the toenail to the deity tortoise; then he got on the back of the tortoise and went without a trace.

Now that rock mountain is still there. It is the most pretty mountain emerging on the shore of the province of Quảng Nam, having its name as Thủy Sơn, but it is called together with four other

mountains in the area as Ngũ Hành Sơn.

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19.

EATING CARAMBOLA, PAYING GOLD

Since time immemorial there was a father who died and left a fortune to his two sons. The older brother scrambled for all of that, sharing only a carambola tree in the garden. But the younger brother was pleased to accept.

One day, when the fruits ripened, there were crows going in flock and eating fruits. The younger brother sadly said to the crows:

- I'm poor, my crop is the carambola tree only. Now you eat all, how can I live on?

The flock of crow answered:

- Eating one fruit, we pay a lump of gold. Because you have a good heart, not greedy like your brother, we will tell you how. You sew a small bag. We will bring you to a mountain having gold.

The flock of crow flew away. Following the crows' words, the younger brother sew a small bag. Evidently, two days later, the crow king flew over and asked:

- Have you sewed that bag yet?

The younger brother responded:

- It's done. Thank you, King of crow.

The crow king landed and told the younger brother to hold the bag and sit on his back. Immediately the king beat his wings to take off. The king flew in the sky, passing this sea then the next, leaving this mountain peak then the next; and finally the king landed at the bottom of a mountain totally in gold and said:

- We reach the objective where we pay for your carambola fruit. You can take the gold as much as you like.

Surprisingly, the younger brother stood in the middle of the resplendent gold mine; then he took the gold to his bag.

The crow king said:

- That's enough for you to take. Would you get on my back and I bring you back home?

The younger brother hold the bag with gold with one hand and the king's back with the other.

Since then, the younger brother became rich.

One day, in the occasion of their father's memorial day the younger brother invited his brother to come to his house. Seeing that his younger brother's house was full of sumptuous furniture, the brother asked the reason. Sincerely the younger brother told him everything.

Touching his greediness, the brother insisted his brother to lend him the carambola tree and did as his brother. The brother sewed a very big bag. The crow king also carried him to the mountain containing gold. He was too happy, definitely believing that this time he would be richer than his younger brother. He scooped the gold up in his hands to fill the bag; he also put the gold in his clothes, not only in his mouth, but also in his ears.

On the way back, because of the over weight, not being able to fly anymore the crow king inclined his wings to one side and the brother felt in the sea and was drowned.

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20.

THREE DIFFICULT THINGS

One day, sitting alone a peasant was thinking. There was a Bad Deity appeared and said:

- You do not need to think too much. If you cannot do one of these three things, I will kill you. So you must execute my order in a rush. First thing: Kill your mother. Second thing: Kill your younger brother. Third thing: Drink.

After saying, the Bad Diety disappeared. He thought: “It’s very difficult for my Mom to born me, there is no reason for me to kill her. My younger brother and I are brothers by birth; I don’t have the heart to kill him. It would better for me to drink.

Thus, he began to drink liquors. With the time he was often drunk and became a drunkar everyday. And one day, he was too drunk; his mother and younger brother advised him to quit drinking; he got very upset, then he took the big knife and chopped both of them to death.

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21.

WATERMELON

In the old days, there was a young man named Mai An Tiêm. Originally he, who was sold as a slave, came from a country far away in the south of the sea. One day, he was brought by the merchant to sell to Hùng Vương (= King Hùng). Mai An Tiêm learned to speak Vietnamese very fast. He remembered many stories, knew a great deal of general knowledge, and he was also talented. More and more the King adored him and always was near him.

At the age of 35 he was a courtier, having his own house near the King's palace. An Tiêm's wife was the King's adopted daughter. In that year they already had a five-year-old son. Mai An Tiêm had enough servants, and in his house there was everything. Even though his power was not very big, he was respected by everyone. There were many people coming to him for help or favor. However, seeing that Mai An Tiêm had a high position,there were not rarely jealous people.

One day, in a banquet treating other mandarins, while everybody boasted of themselves, Mai An Tiêm modestly said to them:

- There is not much! All of the things in in this house are those of my predecessor.

Mai An Tiêm said in his natural tone because the religion in his country said that the present happiness or unhappiness is the result of good or bad behavior in the former karma. But among guests in the banquet, there were some courtiers of the King who detested him for a long time, took advantage of his sentence which they thought was arrogant, and in a hurry they presented it to the King.

Hearing their presentation, King Hùng was enraged and roared:

- Oh oh! Lier! Today he says that, tomo-

row he will say more disrespectful words in the extreme. Traitorous slave! Put him in the jail for me.

That evening, Mai An Tiêm was jailed in the dark cell. At that time he realized that he had made a slip of his tongue. Mai An Tiêm questioned himself: "From now on, if I'm oppressed and humiliated because in my former karma I had bad behavior."

At the same time in the royal court, King Hùng convened his mandarins to judge Mai An Tiêm. Many of them proposed capital punishment, the other suggested to cut the heel of his feet, but a presentation of an old mandarin caught the King's attention:

- Death penalty for him is right. But, be-

before he dies, we should force him to realize penetratively that all of his things here come from your great favor, not from his predecessor at all. I heard that at the estuary of Nga Sơn there is an island. Banish him to the island with two-month food so that he sits and ponders about "the thing of his predecessor" before he breathes his last.

King Hùng nodded his head to agree. But after his order, the King still recommended:

- Give him just enough food for one season.

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On the basnishment day, even though all the people did their best to hinder it, but Mai An Tiêm's wife was determined to go along with her husband to the island; she also led her son along with her. Everyone considered that it was a stupid action. But she trusted her husband: "God creates the elephant, God creates herbs, why be worried?"

However, when they stepped their feet on the deserted, burning beach, the woman was in tears, leaning the head on her husband's shoulder:

- Definitely we will die here!

Mai An Tiêm hugged his wife and solaced:

- God always has his eyes, just be in high

spirits. Don't be afraid.

After more than the first month, their life was temporarily settled. For housing, they crept into a rock hole covered by wattle against fog and wind. For drinking, there was spring water. For salt, they used sea water. But to prolong their lives? The couple looked at the rice bag not full.

Mai An Tiêm said:

- If we have a handful of seed, surely we don't have to worry anymore.

Then one day, all of a sudden there was a group of big birds coming from the west, landing full on a sand area. Then they fled in front of the couple and the boy, crying noisily and dropping five-six seeds.

A while later, there germinated from those seeds a kind of liana that grew and crawled luxuriantly green over the whole place; there were glossily green fruit, big like a human head. Mai An Tiêm plucked one, split it and saw its inside red with shining black seeds. The couple tried to taste and they felt its flavor sweetish and a little delicious. Mai An Tiêm loudly expressed:

- Oh! This is a strange melon we have never seen it before. Let's call it west melon because it came from the West, from the land to us. God feeds us!

Since that day, the couple tried to plant many melons. They planned to eat melon instead of rice because their rice was gone.

One day the couple saw a fishing boat lost its way to the island. After helping fishermen to fix their mizen-sail so that they could return to the land, Mai An Tiêm also gave them some melons in order to transport there for everybody to try to taste them. Mai An Tiêm told them to bring rice for the exchange of melon.

Just some days later, the first boat already anchored at the pier, transporting a fairly great deal of rice for the couple. They mutually exchanged melon for rice. Since then, the meal was different than before. Sitting next to

the white rice pan, which was spirally exhaling, Mai An Tiêm's wife, hugging their son, happily said:

- God really feeds us!

Also since that day the couple planted more melons. As a result, sailing and fishing boats constantly came to the island to exchange rice, clothes, chickens, pigs, knives, hammers, and also some other kinds of seed for melons. There was someone coming to the island who sincerely said to Mai An Tiêm that:

- Truly in the past there never had a kind

of rare, precious melon like this. In our region, everyone hopes to taste this kind of melon even if much rice do they have to trade for it.

Since that time, people competed to buy this melon for its seeds; consequently, only some years later, this new kind of melon spread all over. Mai An Tiêm couple's names were circulated far away; people respectfully called Mai An Tiêm "the Father of West Melon."

Back to King Hùng. One day, reproaching a

courtier, due to ignorance, let the builder construct a house badly, the King let slip to complain:

- It would not be bad if there is Mai An

Tiêm.

On that day, the King was always reminded of him. The King already asked Lạc Hầu to check and see now what Mai An Tiêm was doing and where he is located. Lạc Hầu responded right away:

- Certainly he is gone forever.

But the King did not believe; therefore, the King commanded a servant and provided him with food and boat so that he could go to the island in search of Mai An Tiêm. One month later, he came back with a boat full of melons and respectfully said:

- This is the Mai An Tiêm couple's present

to you, your Highness.

He told the King to know clearly about the Mai An Tiêm couple's arduous days and present status. Then he continued:

- Now, over there the Mai An Tiêm couple has a fairly beautiful house with more than ten servants, fields of melon and rice, and many pigs and chickens.

The more listening the more King Hùng was astonished. The King clicked his tongue, saying to some courtiers who accused Mai An Tiêm before:

- He says this is the thing of his predecessor; it's really correct, nothing wrong.

Immediately the King commanded a group of orderlies to welcome and escort the couple coming back and the King reinstated Mai An Tiêm in his former position. The King also gave two maids to serve him.

Now, in the island the people still called An Tiêm Beach. On the island there are still the Mai An Tiêm couple's descendants. They found a village named Mai An. They established the temple for the couple at the Mai An Tiêm's old house and called "The Founder of West Melon" (i.e. watermelon in the present time).

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22.

NOT WORTH TO LIVE

In his dream, a rich man who loved to gamble saw a fierce, old man who appeared and said:

- Man, I'm waiting for you. Why don't you go to take the money and go to gamble along with me? How many thousand you won yesterday?

The rich man was scared and answered:

- Yesterday I won two thousand. After eating, drinking and sharing with some friends, I still have a thousand.

The old man lowered his voice:

- So don't be stupid for not continuing to gamble again! You will win more. With the winning money you will buy more land, will build beautiful house, will eat well, and wear nice clothes.

The old man burst into convulsive peals of laughter and continued:

- I will help you one more time.

The rich man was very happy. When he woke up, he told his wife about his dream.

Naturally, he won near ten thousand. He was so pleased, and planned not to gamble anymore.

One day, that fierce, old man appeared again and said:

- That man, your turn of events was still lucky, why don't you take advantage of this chance to be rich?

Listening to the old man's urge, he went to the gambling-den and determined to play with a lot of money. Unfortunately he lost the ten thousand won before and thirty more thousand of money. Coming home, he was in no end of sadness. Being in his dream, he saw the old man appeared and said:

- Hey man! Why don't you go to play again to win back? After losing, then you sit there sadly it is very stupid.

Startling and waking up, he put his hat on and went to borrow money from his friends. But the next day he lost so much money. All of his lands and fields were sold.

Coming home, he wife and children hugged him, and cried, lamented tragically. Suddenly the former old man brought a hanging cord and said:

- This time I will help you again. You should follow me. I will lead you to death.

After speaking, the old man burst out his triumphant laughter…

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23.

HÒN VỌNG PHU

EXPLANATION

Kinh Bắc = located in the north of North Vietnam in the old times
Lạng Sơn = a big province located along the border of China, in the northeast of Hanoi and 154 km from Hanoi
Cao Bằng = a province also located along the border of China, smaller than Lạng Sơn, in the north of Lạng Sơn
Kỳ Lừa = a famous commercial center in Lạng Sơn City

Once upon a time, in the town of Kinh Bắc
there was a widow in her young age who caught crabs and shellfishes by feeling with her hands under the water everyday to feed two children, one year boy and one girl. When their mother went to the field, Tô Văn, approximately ten-year son and Tô Thị about eight-year daughter stayed home and played pranks each other as long as they liked; no one could control them.

One day, Tô Văn played the rock throwing game; then somehow he threw a rock hitting in the middle of his younger sister' head. Tô Thị fell on her back and was unconscious, and the blood flowed all over. Tô Văn was so scared and he ran straight to the main road without looking back.

Fortunately, after the accident, a female neighbor came and brought medicine to stop the blood for Tô Thị. When the mother returned home, her daughter could sit up.

But Tô Văn disappeared without a trace and he had not come back yet after one or day later; people sought everywhere but they could not find him anyplace. The mother missed her son, had a broken heart, and day by day she wasted away. A short time later the mother was sick seriously and died, leaving Tô Thị by herself.

The little girl was fed by the neighbors for some days; then a couple, owners of a little restaurant, adopted her to do miscellaneous works. A little time later, this couple moved to Lạng Sơn to open a sour-pork-hash restaurant and they brought Tô Thị along.

Growing up Tô Thị was beautiful, well-behaved, and diligent; therefore, many men paid attention to her. Saving a little capital, she thought of to be independent. At that time the couple already had children to help them. So, when she asked for permission to live independently, both of her adopted parents consented.

She learned the sour-pork-hash trade at
Hàng Cưa in Kỳ Lừa; then, she opened her restaurant and she made delicious sour pork hash. Day by day her restaurant had more customers. People came there to enjoy their delicious hash; there were also others who liked the hash and also were very fond of her

beauty and behavior. To please customers, she acted very well, but she also kept her righteousness; it made people who respected her more and more.

The time went by fast and Tô Thị already twenty years of age. Even though there were many men who offered of marriage to her, but she had not agreed anyone yet.

One day, there was a handsome young man,
bringing Chinese medicine from Cao Bằng to Lạng Sơn to sell. Hearing that at Hàng Cưa in Kỳ Lừa there was a good sour-pork-hash restaurant and also spacious boarding room, the young man came immediately. He felt the hash really delicious and the female owner pretty and fresh. Knowing the restaurant once or twice, every time he brought medicine to Lạng Sơn for his business, he came to Tô Thị's sour-pork-hash restaurant. More and more he and she became friendly; first they liked each other, then they fell in love each other…

After they became husband and wife for more than a year, Tô Thị gave birth to a baby girl. Normally they loved each other with all their hearts. At that time they had a child; it made their love was more attached than ever.

One day the husband came back home and saw his wife sitting to wash her head next to a water jar in the back of the house. He carried the baby and leaned his back to the column to watch his wife washing her hair and at the same time to tell some funny stories to his wife. Suddenly seeing that there was a big scar on his wife's
head, he said right away:

- There has been a big scar on your head
until now I just knew!

Tô Thị asked:

- Oh now you just knew? Do you con-
sidered it is ugly?

- Nothing is ugly? The hair covers it, no-
body knows! Did you have a carbuncle so that you have a big scar like that?

Feeling that her husband asked joyfully, Tô Thị sincerely told him in detail what happened when she was a very young: her brother and she excessively played together; the accident happened; her brother disappeared forever; her mother died; she went along with the restaurant
couple to Lạng Sơn, etc.

The more listening, the more her husband
suffered in his heart. He talked to himself: " Why am I not another person, but Tô Văn? Oh! I have been mistaken to marry my own sister!" He recollected old days, the day he was clumsy with his hand to throw a rock to his sister's head; and thinking that his sister was dead and he was too frightened; therefore, he ran away and did not dare to come back home. Then he was adopted by a Chinese medicine businessman living in Trùng Khánh belonged to Cao Bằng Province. Growing up, he had his family name as Lý like that of his adopted father. He often brought his merchandises to sell in Lạng Sơn; he just stayed there for some days, and when the business was done, he came back to Cao Bằng. More than ten years he went back and forth between Cao Bằng and Lạng Sơn only. And always in his mind he thought that his family in the delta region was no one left, toward himself his old village was in the fog now; so he did not think to come back there anymore.

Lý Văn pondered over and his heart was
broken, but Tô Thị was too busy to comb her head, to wind her hair and she did not notice. She was still joyful, normal, without knowing that her husband was encounting terrible sorrow minutes. The more seeing that his wife was such innocent and joyful, the more he did not want her to know the truth. It was an incestuous marriage, but he had to solve. He had decided to leave because he thought at present his sister or wife was still young and beautiful, anyway she would have found another husband.

In the midst of such situation and feeling there was a recruitment of feudal border guards and Lý Văn registered without discussing a word with his wife. Until he was going to go, he said to his wife:

- I already registered for military service.

Early tomorrow morning I must depart. This service may take three years, sometimes six years and also it may last longer… You stay home to raise our child; for your own part, you decide what to do…

Listening to her husband's words, Tô Thị felt as if it thundered near her ears; she did not understand why they were living in harmony and happiness but the husband left her strangely like that. She cried with pent-up resentment and kept crying without a word. For Lý Văn's part, he felt fidgety in his heart but he thought that his departure was the best solution.

Since her husband's departure, Tô Thị did not care about her business. Everyday she carried her child to the Tam Thanh Pagoda to pray for her husband's safety and for his early coming home to reunite his wife and daughter.

But three years had passed, four years had passed, she did not see her husband coming home even she did not receive any news regarding her husband. There were some men who considered her husband died wanted to propose marriage to her, but she determined to refuse them. Then, there was a village official, notoriously imperious in the area who wanted her to be his mistress. He had powers and very cruel. Loving her very young child, she did not dare to refuse right away because she was afraid of trouble; so she found a way for him to hold a rain check. But she could not keep that way always; therefore, finally she gave him a deadline so that she might find another way later. Then the deadline was almost over, her eyes turned red while waiting but still her husband did not come back.

On the day of deadline, she carried her child to the Tam Thanh Pagoda to pray for help. On that day, all of a sudden it raised a storm. She missed her husband and had pity on herself; she carried the child out of the pagoda, climbed up to the top of the mountain, stood on a highest block of stone, and looked in the direction of her husband's going. The

whole mountain was shook under thunders vertical and horizontal. The shower increased more and more, but Tô Thị stil carried her child without moving.

In the next morning, the rain stopped, the wind was calm, and the sun shone down on the forest and mountain. Looking at the tope of the mountain, so many people in the area saw Tô Thị carrying her child who transformed into a rock statue.

At the present time, that rock statue is still in Lạng Sơn, causing many tourists having some involved emotion when they recollect this awdward legend in the old days with the folk-poem:

In Đồng Đăng there was Kỳ Lừa Quarter,
There was Lady Tô Thị, there was Tam Thanh Pagoda.

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24.

WISE WIFE TEACHES HER HUSBAND

EXPLANATION

Bắc Ninh = a province located in the northeast of Hanoi, next to Hanoi

Former times, in a small village of Bắc Ninh Province, there was a girl in a poor family who was beautiful, intelligent, and thrifty. Her parents worked very hard all the year and month round, but they did not have enough food to eat; their debt increased day-by-day. There was no other way, her parents had to marry their daughter to the son of a rich man in the village for their debt.

After their wedding, the new couple moved to their own home. After three to four years in marriage, she gave birth twice, but only one was saved. Even though she was busy with their very young child, she managed to take care all of houseworks from big to small things. From business, ploughing, and transplanting to swine, chicken, her eyes missed nothing. Her husband was stupid beyond description; everyday he just ate, then he did whatever she asked him to do.

One day their very young child was sick, she had to stay home to take care of him/her; therefore, the husband had to bring a dog to the market to sell. He did not know how to do the business, but there was no one who could do it for him; so reluctantly he had to go. Knowing her husband very well, she told her husband many times that:

- Getting to the market, you sell to whomever pays 8 pennies in cash or plus 1.4 on credit. If you cannot sell at that price, be patient to bring it back; however it is better if you can sell at higher price.

In that market day, there was an old Chinese teacher in the area. Just getting to the market, he saw the young man selling the dog; whoever asked how much does it cost, he always answered: "8 pennies in cash, 1.4 on credit." The old teacher: "This man sells his dog, but still want them buy on credit so that he has the opportunity to visit it once more time; he is really a loyal person." So the old teacher stopped to buy and told him:

- OK! Sell it to me. Three days later you come to my home to collect the money. My village is located in the north of this market; the beginning of the village is a place which "having water without fish, having fish without water". When you get there, come

into the village; then when you see a house near the village temple which "having needle without thread, having thread without needle", you just come inside.
That is my house.

Following his wife's words, he came back home after selling the dog. Being afraid of forgetting what the old teacher told him, he walked and spoke under his breath: "Having water without fish, having fish without water… ."

Three days later, the young child was still sick, the wife had to let the husband go to collect the dog's money. On that day, he did not remember what the old teacher said and he did not know how to find his house. After breakfast, again the wife had to show him how to go and collect the money.

- You get to the market, then follow the main road in the north. Just keep going to a village; at the beginning of it there was a security post hanging a wooden bell having the shape of a fish; next to it, you see a well, just come in this village. Getting to the middle of the village, you see any house next to the temple which has a fence and a bush of dodder; that was exactly the old man's house.

Following his wife's direction, he found the old teacher's house. Seeing him coming, the old teacher lavishly praised him that he was intelligent, and called his family member to cook for treating the husband to a good meal. While they were eating and talking of many things, then the old teacher knew a lot of his family. After eating and drinking, the old teacher paid him completely and gave him a gift to bring back to his wife…

At home, the wife was on tenterhooks; seeing that her husband came back home with complete money, and that there was a gift for her, she was in no end of happiness. Opening the gift, she saw a handful of perfumed, really white rice, there was some decayed local tomatoes; that was exactly her situation. Right away she lamented: "What a pity for perfumed jasmine rice to be cooked in an expensive copper pan, but be soused with tomato soup!"

That night, she tossed about sleeplessly.

Feeling sad about her lot, she decided to leave her home and village. Early in the morning, the one hand carrying the young child, the other a bag of clothes, she departed. Getting to a very small canal watering place, she could not reach the other side because the bridge made of bamboo which was being put over the canal every day was carried to the bank by someone.

Seeing that an old man curbing his back swam and dived at the place as if he would have looked for something, she asked:

- Oh, my old man! What are you looking for? Would you help me to put the bridge over the canal?

The old man responded:

- I'm busy to look for a needle.

- I thought of something else, but just a needle why should you waste your time to look for it. Come on, please help me!

- My wife left this needle for me. Before dying, she kept remind me not to lose it. It does not cost that much, but is very precious for me. Wife and husband who lived together and had living and dead children, we must be faithful to the end.

Hearing the old man said, she was stunned and at a loss for a long time; then she felt that she could not go on her way. She came back to the husband and since then she tried to teach him how to become a clever person.

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25.

BAMBOO TREE HAVING

ONE HUNDRED INTERNODES

Once upon a time, there was a rich old man who was notorious for deception, cruelty, and cunning. He used all tricks to exploit his servants and laborers; therefore, owing to this he became the richest man in the area.

He had a youngest daughter who was beautiful and single. In his house there was a servant who worked for him since he was very young; this young servant did hundreds of chores.

When he was 18 years of age, afraid of his leaving for another place, one day the rich old man called him and said:

- You take pains to stay with me, work very well, stay up late, wake up early, be assiduous, then I will marry my youngest daughter to you.

The servant believed his words and was very happy; since then he worked five to ten times more than before. Three years passed, now the baby daughter grew up. In the area, there was a notoriously rich chief of the canton who wanted to engage her to his son; on the occasion of that, the old rich man accepted the engagement and he prepared for a lavish wedding.

Realizing he was being duped, the servant was upset, and came to see the old rich man for the reason, he said:

- You promised to marry your youngest daughter to me, why now you break your words and marry her to someone else?

At first the rich old man was gloweringly angry, planning to beat him up, but at second thought, he stopped his plan and answered:

- Nonsense! I see that my youngest

daughter grew up this year; it's good enough to be married; I am preparing the wedding; it's yours. But if you want to marry her right away, you must do this for me: Take pains go up to the jungle and find a bamboo tree having one hundred internodes. If you bring it back here for me to make chopsticks by whittling bits of bamboo used in the wedding, I will let you marry her.

The sincere servant tooks the rich old man at his word, immediately he carried his glover up to the jungle. But day by day and jungle to jungle he could not find any bamboo tree that had enough one-hundred internodes. Disappointedly, he sat down in the jungle and cried loudly.

All of a sudden he saw an old man, with white hair on the head, ruddy-complexioned skin, keensighted eyes, smiling mouth, who walked deliberate steps with a stick, approached him and asked:

- Why are you crying?

He told the story from the beginning to the end. After hearing, the old man said:

- You go to chop enough for one hundred internodes of bamboo, bring them here for me.

Listening to the old man, he carried his glover, chopped on the left and on the right, then just a little while later he had enough for one hundred internodes of bamboo.

The old man prayed the incantation: "Join together! Join together!"

Right away one hundred internodes of bamboo lying all over the place moved and jointed together to become a bamboo tree having one hundred internodes.

He was so happy and he just planned to bend his back for bowing, but the old man disappeared. At that time he knew the old man was Bụt. He tried to carry the bamboo home, but there was no way because it was too long and entangled with this tree and an other tree in the jungle.

Worriedly and sadly, he sat down and cried loudly. Instantly he saw the previous old man reappeared. He asked again:

- Why are young crying?

He told him the situation. Right away Bụt pointed his finger at the bamboo tree and prayed the incantation: "Separate from each other! Separate from each other!" At once the bamboo tree separated by internodes. The servant bound them into two bundles. Then Bụt taught him the two incantations "Join" and "Separate" about the bamboo.

When he came back to the place, there were a lot of people; members of the both families were eating and drinking noisily and there were wedding presents on the altars and tables. He was so upset and came to the rich old man and questioned:

- Why you demanded that I go to the jungle to find a bamboo tree having one hundred internotes in order to make chopsticks for my wedding, now you are marrying your youngest daughter to someone else?

The rich old man gave a loud laugh and answered:

- I asked you to chop a high bamboo tree having one hundred internodes, and I did not order you to chop one hundred internodes of bamboo!

All family members of both sides stopped their chopsticks, laughed, and mocked the naive servant who was poor and did not know his position: "Just a leech who wants to climb on the crane's leg."

The servant was sad and felt self-pity a little bit, but he asked the rich old man come to the yard to see the bamboo tree having one hundred internodes which he brought back. The rich old man laughed teasingly and followed him. He put two bundles of bamboo on the ground and displayed them in front of everybody; then he prayed the incantation: "Join together! Join together!" Righ away one hundred internotes joined

together to become a long bamboo tree that also stuck the rich old man who was staring round-eyes at the internodes. He did his best to separate from the bamboo tree in vain.

The in-law chief of canton and his son, who was the groom, saw that; they ran out and planned to help the rich old man disentanglehimself from the bamboo tree. Waiting until both came near the bamboo tree, the servant prayed the incantation: "Join together! Join together!"

At that time both family members paled with scare and fright, and they did not dare to think about disentanglement or mock. They stood on line and begged from the servant for releasing those three persons.

The youngest daughter knew her father did the wrong thing; therefore, he received the consequence. She said to the servant:

- You forgive my father. I will be your wife and today is our wedding.

He turned to the rich old man who was grimacing at suffering:

- How, I already found the exact bamboo tree having one hundred internodes according to your condition, now what are you planning?

The rich old man pointed his finger at his youngest daughter:

- I marry my daughter to you. Hurry to release us.

The servant waited until everybody unanimously agreed, then he prayed the incantation: "Separate from each other! Separate from each other!"

At that moment, two in-laws and the groom were disentangled, and the bamboo tree fell down and became one hundred internodes.

The groom's family members avoided the entanglement and went home in a hurry. And the rich old man reluctantly had to marry his beautiful youngest daughter to the servant who had the miracle regarding the bamboo tree having one hundred internodes.

Each time he was reminded about this story, he was still scared because of fright. Since then, he never looked down on his diligent groom any more.

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26.

THE POT OF SLAKED LIME

In olden times, there was a burglar sharing a room with a beggar couple. One day, not be able to beg anything, the beggar said to his wife:

- You stay home. I go to steal some potatoes for our hunger temporarily.

The wife did not agree and said:

- Already we are ashamed to beg, if now going to steal we have so much more sins. We would rather to lie down here to die.

Sneakily listening to the wife's words, the beggar repented of his sins very much. Right at the same day, the beggar came to a pagoda to request for being initiated into Buddhism. The bonze superior assigned him to boil water to worship Buddhas. Everyday he fulfilled his duty and diligently helped other works like a very religious person.

In the pagoda there was a monk—even though he had entered monkhood for many years, his personality was not mild—who heard the rumor that there was a tiger hanging around the spring to look for its prey; so he though of a ruse to harm the burglar;

therefore, he told the burglar to go to the spring to take water to worship Buddhas. The burglar docilely obeyed him. After taking water, on the way back, the burglar encountered the tiger appearing and wanting to eat him. He was so scared and begged that:

- Please spare me now! Let me bring the water to boil and worship Buddha; then I come back here for you to eat me.

The tiger agreed. After boiling the water to worship Buddhas, the burglar returned to the spring and planned to accept being killed. The bad monk sneakily followed him. When the burglar met the tiger, he bowed down and waited for his death, but the tiger said:

- Your meat is too tough. Let climb on the tree, take your hands off the branch, and jump down so that your meat is soft; then I will eat. But when the burglar took his hands off the branch and jumped down for the tiger to eat his body, a halo appeared and carried his soul to the Nirvana. At that time the bad monk witnessed everything happening.

Then the bad monk came back to the pagoda and asked the bonze superior to replace the burglar's duty. He also did the same thing as the burglar did and he encountered the tiger. Nobody knew . . . when taking off his hands from the branch to jump down, he was pierced at his abdomen by the other branch and his intestines came out. His abdomen swelled up, transforming into a pot of slaked lime, and the branch piercing his abdomen transformed into a tiny fork picking the lime.

Now every time to chew betel, people use the tiny fork to pick the lime in the pot of slaked lime as if the branch pierced the bad monk's abdomen.

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27.

FOUR BUDDHIST MONKS
&
THE BAG OF GOLDEN COINS

There were four Buddhist monks who were famous for their true monkhood who usually came to chant prayers at a pagoda. Always they came at the same time and each sat at a corner, their backs faced each other, then they chanted prayers.

One day, there was a businessman who knew these monks of great righteousness and generosity came to ask them to keep for him a bag containing thousand of golden coins. The four monks accepted and asked him to put the money in the middle of the pagoda. After that, the businessman came back home and he was reassured that he did put the money in a trustworthy place.

The next morning, the businessman came to the pagoda and saw that four monks already sat and chanted prayers at four corners as usual. He asked for his bag of golden coins. All of them answered together: "You go to where you put the money and get it!" But the bag without wing flew away! Being so upset, the businessman accused them of stealing his money and brought them to the local official.

But the official was also puzzled and did not know how to judge. So they went together and presented the matter to the King.

After hearing both sides, the King was also perplexed as to how to arbitrate justly. The King assembled his court officials to discuss the matter over and over, but no one offered a very good solution. The King was in a divided mind; he could no t eat and sleep well, but still he did not find any trick.

Thấy công chúa quả quyết, vua cha an lòng và bình tĩnh chờ xem công chúa xét xử việc này ra sao.

The King had a princess both beautiful and intelligent whom he loved very much. Seeing that her King father always thought of the one thousand golden coins story of that businessman, she presented her idea to him:

- Please don't worry and be sad, let me investigate this matter. I promise that I will find the culprit.

Seeing that the princess was determined, the King her father felt assured and was patient to wait and see how the princess would take care of the matter.

Immediately the princess ordered her servants to invite the four monks to the royal palace. After some greetings as usual, the princess said to them:

- I know you are four real monks with high ethics and virtue and wisdom rarely found in this world; therefore, today I invite you to come here to advise me in one matter.
- You have something in your mind, please don't hesitate to tell us, perhaps we may help you somehow?

The princess continued:

- Now I would tell you a story; I am very in divided mind that I could not know exactly who is good or bad in the story; so, after hearing I hope you can give me advice.

Then the princess began to tell the story:

"In the old days, there was a girl leaving her family for studying with a Taoist hermit. After completing her studies, the girl said good-bye to her teacher before coming back home. But the girl had nothing to pay his favor, so she said:

- Dear teacher! I am so poor and there is nothing to pay your favor to teach and train me. Besides my body, I have nothing more. So, I ask your permission to go home, in the future I would come back and offer my body to you to pay this moral debt. I hope you to understand my sincerity.

Touched by the sincere words of the female student, the Taoist hermit accepted. But while she was not home, her mother agreed to marry her to a young man in the same village; and since then the mother desparately waited for her coming back. Therefore, when she just got home, the mother arranged the wedding ceremony right away. In the wedding night, the girl refused to sleep on the same bed with her husband with the reason that she was too tired because she just came back from a long distance. Because of his love to his wife, the husband listened to her. In the next morning, the girl asked her husband for permission to go visit her Taoist teacher. Even though the husband was surprised, he agreed her to leave because he loved and trusted his wife.

The girl departed for her teacher's home. On the way she encountered a hungry tiger that wanted to eat her. Right away she said to the tiger:

- Please let me go because I am on my way to my teacher's home. I promised that I will offer him something precious; then I will come back here for you to eat me.

Hearing the girl saying that, the tiger felt emotional and let the girl pass. Going for a short distance, the girl met a robber who wanted to rob all of her jewelry. The girl begged:

- Please let me wear my jewelry. I must go to visit my teacher; therefore, I should wear my jewelry to embellish my beauty so that my teacher will be pleased. You let me go, I will give you my jewelry when I come back.

Hearing that, the robber was also touched and let the girl go. Reaching the place, the girl said to her teacher:

- Before I promised you, today I come to to serve you one night for showing my gratitude towards you. I already married, but you are the person who enjoys my virgin body! ...

But the Taoist hermit responded in a hurry:

- I am very happy to meet you again. I am very pleased because I have trained a student who knows to keep the promise. Knowing to keep the promise is to respect the honor. That means you already to pay my favor. So, now you should come back to your husband and love him, and prove to him that you are a good wife. I wish you happy!

Then she was given a good send-off. On the way back, the girl did not encounter the tiger or the robber.

Finally the girl safely came back home; her husband was so happy, and since then they happily lived together."

Finishing the story, then the princess asked the four monks:

- Dear venerable monks! That was such a story! Please help by telling me among these persons and animal meeting the girl, who was the best?

Without thinking, a monk answered right away:

- The husband himself was the best! He maried his wife, not because of fleshly matter. He loved and trusted his wife so that he let her leave right after their wedding night.

Hearing that, the princess thought to herself: "This person is really a true monk!"

The second monk argued:

- In my opinion, the Taoist hermit, the girl's teacher, is really the best. It would be a big miss if a cat refuses to enjoy when the bait is at its mouth!

The princess thought: "This guy is a real pervert!"

The third monk said:

- No! The tiger himself is the best! It is hungry but let the girl escape!

The fourth monk raised his voice at last:

- I see that the robber himself is the best. He allowed the girl with all gold and gem on her body to go free!

The princess nodded and thought to herself: "Exactly this monk stole the bag of golden coins! He is greedy to such a degree that he wants the robber to take the girl's jewelry."

The princess already knew clearly the real character of each monk, but she still wanted to test them one more time; so she said:

- Thank you very much for your advice so that I know clearly what have bothered me. These are golden words. They expand my brain and mind so that I am more intelligent. You are real scholars. I already swore that only scholars can be my husband. I'm already old enough to marry. But here there are four of you, while I can marry only one. Therefore, tomorrow I will accept one of you who would bring the most money as my husband.

Completing her words, the princess bowed down to the four monks and retired to her palace. The four monks also left; each had his own mood.

In the next morning, it was still daybreak, here came a monk with one thousand golden coins to the royal palace. That was the person who commended that the robber was good.

But, just reaching the place, all excitement and hope of the cobra monk were totally dispersed. He saw that next to the princess there were the King and a whole group of security soldiers with arms in their hands. The princess ordered:

- Arrest this man! He himself was the

burglar of the businessman's bag of golden coins left in the pagoda. Return the bag of golden coins which is on his hand right now to the person who was stolen.

Later on, the princess told her tricks to her king father and the court officials. Everyone greatly admired her intelligence. And the story about the princess to be the judge has been told until the present time.

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28.

SAVE ANIMAL, ANIMAL PAYS BACK

In former times there was a person who was sincere and frank. Seeing anyone who was oppressed, he stil tried his best to defend even though he was detriment himself. Therefore, the rich people in the area detested him very much. They found ways to bully, to choke him up; so he had to leave his home and go to the mountains to live, then he became a hunter to make a living. Even his situation was very bad, his heart was kind as usual. Though there was not enough food in his home, he never shot animals pregnant or raising their babies. He would come home without any meat than to shot animals while the male and female walked together.

Hunting for many years, he remembered the jungle and mountains as the roads and alleys in his own village. He recognized stags and deers that he used to see. Among them he usually saw a couple of snake, big as a banana tree with black skin as charcoal,

more than ten feet long, that lived together in a deep cave. Every morning they went together for their food. Each time the female snake cast her skin, the male snake brought food to the cave. In that winter, it was the turn in which the male snake cast his skin and lay at one place. But the female snake was not faithful to him. She had an affair with another male snake. Taking advantage that the husband snake was very weak, she planned to bring her lover to the cave to kill her husband.

Seeing two bad snakes, the hunter hated them; then he sat in watching out for them, determining to kill both of them. But when they came, he had enough time to shoot the female snake only. The male snake had enough time to ran to the jungle. Waiting his meal and not seeing his wife bringing food back, the husband snake crawled out to the front of the cave to wait. Seeing that his wife was dead with an arrow through her eye, the husband snake knew that the hunter whom he met everyday shot his wife; so he waited for the avenging moment. When the casting of his skin had completed, he crawled to the door of the hunter's house, lying and waiting. On the same night, the hunter did not sleep well. He woke up in the middle of the night; he tried to sleep again but he could not; so he awoken his wife, told her about the unfaithful female snake and killed her to save the male snake who was casting his skin

Lying outside of the door, the male snake heard everything clearly. At that time he knew that it was saved by the hunter. If the latter did shoot and kill his wife, he would have been bit to death! Resentment becoming gratitude, he bowed his head and wormed his way through the door slit of the hunter's house. Hearing the sound, the hunter got up and reached his hand to take the bow and arrow. Seeing the snake, he drew the bow and put an arrow in position, planning to shoot. But the snake rolled up, his head bowed down, and his tongue did not hang out. He nodded his head a couple times, spat out a gem, then quietly sneaked out. The hunter recognized the snake whom he met everyday; right away he came to pick the gem up to examine. The hunter was very surprised because he heard the voice of mosquitoes talking in the dark night, ants urging one another to dig holes and being afraid of losing their group. Then he also heard the male

snake's voice clearly: "Compensating your favor to save my life, paying back your good deed fairly."

One day he shot a very big wild ox. When the couple was tearing its meat to dry, a flock of crows came and swooped down to steal the meat. He hoarsely shouted them, but they still threw themselves headlong at the meat. Being upset, he took the bow and an arrow, shot only one. Unfortunately, the arrow got the leading crow. The flock carried the dead leading crow and the arrow to fly away. They flew to the plain and passed villages and hamlets, but they still did not find a way to revenge the hunter. Flying across a river, they saw the corpse of a drowning person floating to the bank; they brought the arrow and thrust it into that corpse. The drowning person's family members found the corpse, brought it and the arrow to the royal palace to sue. The King ordered to the public that whoever possessed bows and arrows had to bring and present them at the King's court. All people who had bows and arrows from hight mountains to deserted villages obeyed the King's order. The hunter also came to the court and brought along the gem too.

The King commanded all people brought out their arrows and compared them to the arrow that stuck on the corpse. Everybody compared; only the hunter's arrow looked alike. The King ordered to arrest him, awaiting for the judging day. Suddenly bearing the misfortune, the hunter tried his best to explain the circumstance, but the King did not listen. The bad rich people had the chance to add something bad about the hunter. Reclutantly he had to wait to the day that he paid back the drowning person's life with that of him.

In the prison, he could not sleep because of missing his wife, home, and the jungle. In the middle of the night, owing to carry along the gem, he heard the flock of ants crawling on the wall that urged one another:

- It's going to flood very high! We must go

to the King's warehouses to carry and save paddy for our food. If it's late, we will be starved!

In the next morning, he also heard sparrows and larks said one another:

- Only going to the King's warehouses we find a lot of paddy. In it there were so much paddy.

Playing around, at that time the mice were afraid of losing their share; therefore, they called and yelled noisily:

- Paddy in the king's storage! Sparrow and larks have almost carried it! If we don't compete with them, we will be starving. Big flood lasting so many days!

Sparrows, larks, ants, and mice had talked, the hunter clearly heard all of it. At the time the guard bringing his meal, the hunter gave the message:

- Tell the King that it's going to have big storm and flood. The rice and paddy in the storage were all carried by birds, ants, and mice for their prevention of flood. Tell the King to run, if not he will die.

The guard presented it to the King. He sneered:

- A dog is trying to teach a tiger to jump high. If he is talented, he already begged me to assign him as an astrologer, a geomancer, and he was not stupid to rob and kill people. Tighten his cangue up!

The guard tighten the hunter's cangue more. On the day he wife visited, he informed her that it was going to flood soon, and told her to come back to her former village to let her relatives and neighbors know. Believing the couple's words, everyone was tried to reap rice plants early, put the paddy on high huts, make boats, make dried rice cakes, fry the rice ready for flood prevention.

Only the rich people spoke ill of the action of the hunter's wife and they brought the matter to the King. Then the King accused the hunter couple of being accomplices and rebels; therefore, he ordered to arrest, bind, and carry her to his prison on waiting to the day of their capital punishment.

The execution day already came. The couple were brought to the execution ground. When they were bound upright to two stakes, the wind flew strongly and black clouds appeared and circle. The sky turned dark, then a so powerful shower came suddenly. The hunter couple could not see each other even though they were separated only some steps. The water moved up to their thighs, then to their chests. The officials and soldiers ran helter-skelter. The stakes binding the couple were also uprooted. He untied himself then untied for his wife. The water was already very deep. Both were swimming in the immense flood, there came a raft. The person on the raft pulled them up. After her unconciouness, the hunter's wife recognized the rafter saving their lives who himself was the first person being informed about the flood by her.

The rain lasted for a long time, the wind roared, and the whole royal court sank into the water. The raft made of banana tree of the kind-hearted neighbor carried the hunter couple back to their former village. All of the rich, dishonest, and cruel people were drowned. Only the poor people who listened to the advice of the hunter's wife were still alive on rafts and on the branches of high trees.

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29.

BẢY GIAO & CHÍN QUỲ

EXPLANATION

Mỹ Tho City = a popular city, located in the southwest of Saigon, 72km from the Ben Thanh Market
Mỹ Tho Province = located in the southwest of Saigon, smaller than Tiền Giang Province of the present time

Very, very long time ago in the village market Cả Sẽ (formerly belonged to Mỹ Tho Province, now, Tiền Giang Province), there was two brothers: the older one named Bảy Giao, the younger one, Chín Quỳ. Their parents died early, leaving for them some acres of bad rice field only. By nature they were sturdy, so they determined to use their strength to perform in life. Hearing that in Bình Định there were many good martial arts professionals, they sold all their fields; then they carried some clothes and personal things, went there to study.

They practiced with many instructors; soon they were proficient in 18 kinds of martial arts. They were very excited to achieve their fame and fortune. But at that time the king court opened widely for literature and closed tightly for martial arts; so, finally they had no way to make a living and they reluctantly returned to their home town. At the village both instructed people martial arts for their living, but their skills in the art of fighting were not good enough to feed themselves.

In very bad situation, they called for each other to practice burglary. Gradually being bold, they became two professional highwaymen. But they took money from the rich only, then they gave it to the poor whom they met.

After ten years doing robbery, their torn clothes were still torn, Bảy Giao said to Chín Quỳ:

- We have tried to use our skills and strength to help people but we did not get a favorable turn of events. I do not like to have a hiding life forever. Well, we should give up this business and go some place to work!

At that time Cồn Tàu Islet was not developed; a kind of tree named “gừa” covered all its upper side and on the lower side there were nipas and bushes booming as a forest.

At the islet there was a deity, having a very strong supernatural power, who had two subordinates; they were a tiger and a wild boar very fiece, devastating the area. For a long time ago, the deity informed that: whoever comes to destroy the forest, he or she must pay a human life. There were some careless people came and chopped a load of wood, but they who had not left the islet yet were killed by his subordinates following his order. A dry branch of tree was still intact there.

Hearing the news, the two brothers came to Cồn Tàu immediately and prayed to the deity:

- We have heard that you have sacred supernatural power. Today we beg you to be generous by agreeing not to destroy anything for three years. When the time comes, you choose to arrest anyone of us or both of us, we do accept with pleasure.

Hearing they guaranteed like that, the deity agreed them to come.

After that, they bought a row boat, rowed it there, chopped the bushes and trees down, and carried them to the market to sell. Completing one trip, they did it again; soon they cleared up a part of the forest. The deity already let slip a promise, so he had to allow them to do it, but he was very furious. When it was near three-year due date, the two brothers remembered the promise; so they asked the blacksmith to make for them two cudgels weighed hundreds of pounds. Then, they came to Cồn Tàu and prayed to the deity:

- We keep the promise and come here for you to take our lives. Please send someone to do it.

Completing their words, they took off their shirts, standing back to back, and each held a cudgel, being ready their fighting positions. The deity commanded Hổ Đen, his first subordinate, to take their lives. From his den Hổ Đen came out then jumped straightly to Chín Quỳ's body. Fast with his hands, Chín Quỳ beat it one cudgel. Hổ Đen fell down and was unconscious.

Seeing that, the deity was in rage and ordered Lợn Lòi, his second subordinate, to come out to kill them. This wild boar, which was as big as a young buffalo with more than one-span long fangs, full of saliva on its mouth, ran very fast and dashed at Bảy Giao. He darted his cudgel at the boar, hitting its thigh. Even though one of his legs was crippled, but the deity reinforced it with some supernatural power, so it was overwhelmingly brave and dashed at Bảy Giao and it was going to bite him. Turning his body, Chín Quỳ saved and helped his brother. Finally, both of them had a very hard time to subdue this fierce boar.

Seeing that he lost two very efficient subordinates at one time, the deity was very scared and did not dare to do anything more. The two brothers had waited him until the late afternoon, then they bound the board and the tiger, carried them to the row boat, and prayed that:

- Now, feeling pity for us, you did not kill

kill and reward us some meat, we are very grateful. So, from now on we cancel the previous promise.

Completing their prayer, the two brothers brought the tiger and the board and cut their meats for the people in the village.

The people said that since then the deity had no more supernatural power. Everyone rushed to Cồn Tàu to change waste land into cultivated area.

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30.

SENSITIVE PLANT

In the old days, there was a very beautiful girl. Everyone in the village felicitated her beauty. Her name was Trinh who had a very slim appearance and graceful gestures. Particularly she had real black eyes covered after long also dark eyelids.

Eveyday Ms. Trinh had to work hard by selling vegetables in the market to feed her old mother and younger brother and sister. Whenever being looked by any young man she was always shy, bending her head. Her eyelids closed down, hiding her eyes.

Who would not fall in love with her when she had such beauty and behavior?

In her village there was a mandarin's son named Xinh. He fell in love with Ms. Trinh; everyday he waited for her on the road to express his love to her. But she refused and responded:

- Everything must wait for the acceptance
of her mother at home.

Being love sick, one day she followed and watched her. Taking advantage of her while she her hand. She said:

- You shouldn't do such action. I'd rather
die than being humiliated…

Day by day his love sick was more serious. The village rich man, his father, knew that his son who was grown up needed a wife; so he searched
a compatible family to engage his son's marriage. However, Xinh could not stop his love sick. He always regretted that Ms. Trinh was not a rich parents' daughter and unfortunately her family was extremely angered with disappointment, walking back and forth like a fool.

After that he went to study in a far distance. The time went by many years, but Ms. Trinh's image was still alive in his mind. One day, coming back to his home village, Xinh wandered in the garden near the riverside.

All of a sudden, from the bush, Ms. Trinh walked out. In standing, he watched her. Then Ms. Trinh began to sing with a clear voice was all a tremble and turned her body

going to run away. He darted to her, held her hand then hugged her. Evidently he saw the same eyes covered behind her dark eyelids. He bent his face to kiss. Oh, my God, she breathed her last. He startled and realized that he had bent down on the ground to kiss a pink-purple flower on a plant with tiny, fine leaves which would close whenever the wind or a breath touched them.

After questioning around the neighbor, he learned that Ms. Trinh committed suicide two years ago because there had been a corrupt mandarin using his power in order to rape her. In conclusion, virginity was valued so much! Even though she was already dead, the lady still kept the chastity of her soul.

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31.

FOUR FRIENDS

Once upon a time there were four friends, living in different locations. Because when they were young, they had the same teacher at the same time, so they lived together in the same house for a long time; then gradually they became friends from childhood.

Lately they grew up and they said goodbye to their teacher; each person had his working and living in a different place. In those four persons, only Giáp was the owner of a very big private house and day by day he became richer, having full of possessions, while three others were poor as church mouses. But Giáp was a furtive, wicked, and fond of beauty. Even though he was rich and happy, deep in his heart he still felt bothered

because he married a woman who brought to him a lot of money and property but in terms of beauty she was nothing. In schooling days, seeing the wife of Ất—one of four friends—who was pretty, he was jealous of his friend. He thought very much about this woman and desired to have this lovely gem in his hand to be satisfied.

One day on the occasion of Ất's visit to Giáp's house, the latter said with lacrity to his friend:

- You says you are very poor, why don't you throw away your books to go into business for one time?

Ất shook his head:

- To be in business people must have the capital. I don't have it so I can't go into the business.

Immediately Giáp put one hundred quan coins in front of Ất and said:

- We're friends, I'm pleased to lend you this amount of money to start your business. I will tell you one of my acquaintances; you can do business in partnership with him for while to have experiences. I just hope when you are rich, you do not forget me and this petty amount of money; that is enough.

Unexpected that his friend was too kind to him, Ất bewilderedly thanked Giáp and held his hand up to swear that he will never forget his benefactor for the rest of his life. Finally Ất took the money, went to the salesman's house according to Giáp's tip, and tried to do business for one time to see what would had been the outcome.

After knowing that Ất was out of his house, Giáp began to exercise his plot. One day, on the occasion of his wife's sleep as a log, he choked her to death, then cut her head off, hiding it under a very small granary. Then, Giáp came to Ất's house and used his sweetly cunning words to invite Ất's wife to his house. He said:

- Before going to do his business, your husband gave the money to my wife and asked you come to get it but he reminded that don't let anybody know, if not your debtor would know and they will not let you spend it!

The lady used to hear her husband commended Giáp for his willingness, so she did not suspect anything, then she followed him to his house. When Ất's wife already came inside the house Giáp used money, possessions, and very sweet words to lure her; but he did not expect that the lady determined to be faithful to her husband, she would had rather to die than to be disgraceful. At last, reluctantly he had to detain her in a locked room. He ordered his maid to watch her and each day to bring food and drink to Ất's wife with the hope that within couple days he would had forced her accepting to live together with him. And then, taking advantage of dark night he secretly carried his wife's dead body and threw it inside Ất's house. Besides, being worried his maid revealing his secrecy, he forced her to drink a medicament bought from a foreign businessman. After drinking, the maid's tongue was curtailed, she only spoke incoherent sounds rather than words.

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Regarding Ất, after his first business trip he was shared some earning and he joyfully planned to bring the money and show it to his wife. He was frightened to see his wife being a rotten corpse without head. Not having enough time to mourn, police officers (in the old time) already rushed into the house, put the cangue on his neck, and brought him to the county chief. Ất always blamed that he was innocent, but he had no way to break the officer group's suspicion. After many days of torture in which he could not bear hot, cold pincers, he had to admit the crime. County and also province officers unanimously accused him for his wife's murder. Finally this accusation was to be sentenced the same; Ất was put in the cell, waiting for the day of execution.

At that time there was a custom that if a capital punishment convict contributed one thousand quan coins to the government bank and someone sponsored him, he would have saved his life. Therefore, when Ất was in jail, his mother went all over to borrow and beg everyone. All relatives, friends, and neighbors had the pity for his unlucky

situation. With pleasure they helped her some or a lot. However, Ất's mother could not have enough that so big amount of money in a short time.

Hearing Ất in big trouble, Ất's two other friends whose name are Bính and Đinh came to visit Ất in the cell. After that they met Ất's mother who was standing at the crossroad, crying and begging passers-by's pity and hoping to have enough money to save her son's life. After listening to the story from Ất's mother, they suddenly remembered Giáp who was rich and also Ất's old friend, and perhaps due to friendship he could help Ất in very bad time. In that thought they consoled Ất's mother and promised that they would have done their best to save their friend out of his terrible death sentence.

When Bính and Đinh came to Giáp's house, they told him everything happened at Ất's house: how the calamity came to Ất, how was the situation in which his old mother had to bear the sun or the rain to beg the passers-by's philandropy… At last, both of them said:

- At present if add all of the money from

relatives, neighbors, and passers-by in addition to our properties sales, the most amount we can have about 500 quan coins. We do not know how to find the rest of 500 quan coins; therefore, reluctantly we came here to call for your friendship. It's so easy for you to have more than that amount of money. Please save the life of our close friend who was a victim of a deadly injustice. This is your responsibily and also ours.

But they did not expect that deep in Giáp's heart he just wishes Ất's death so that his plot ran smoothly. Giáp's answer made them very surprised and disappointed:

- Who is sure that he isn't the culprit?

Let's look at the matter in which he welshed on my one hundred quan coins then you know what happened. He begged me to lend him for doing business; I willingly lent it to him, but I asked him couple times and no money was returned. Murderer must paid back. He killed his wife and God will punish him. Even though we try our best, we cannot save him. I have no extra money to do such action!

Realizing that there was no way to change Giáp's mind, Bính and Đinh decided to sacrifice their life to save their friend. Immediately they came to the government court and said that because Ất's wife was too beautiful so both of them took advantage of the time in which Ất was not home, they came, caught and raped her; and after that being afraid of her report against them, they killed her, chopping her head and throwing it into the river to lose it. Then they had had been regretted very much and had had realized there would have been a day of revelation, so they confessed in advance to receive some tolerance.

After hearing the story, the madarine chief officer ordered to jail Bính and Đinh and to release Ất. In no time their crime was sentenced. Instead of cutting their bodies by each stroke of the drum and hanging their corpses, the executioner just cut their heads off owing to their confession in advance.

But when the executioner prepared to do his job, suddenly people saw a girl was trying to get out of the crowd and dashed to the government chief. Her two hands showed here and there, and her mouth could not speak clearly, making a sign of stopping. The chief was surprised, thinking that this person knew something about the homicide; so he commanded the executioner to stop his action and to lead the criminals to the cell in waiting for the re-examination.

Coming back to his office, the chief ordered the Chinese herb doctor preparing a bowl of medicine to cure her mute sickness. That bowl was very efficient, in fact the girl gradually could speak: That was the maid at Giáp's house. And clearly she told her boss' actions to everybody.

Owing to that the crime was clarified. Soldiers were immediately commanded to come to Giáp's house and they opened the door of Ất's wife room to release her coming back to her husband. At the same time, the chief ordered to put the cangue on Giáp's neck and pushed him to the jail to received the capital punishment to replace Bính and Đinh. Thinking of friendship, these two persons tried their bests to present to the chief so that Giáp could be saved from the death penalty with his one-thousand-quan-coins redemptive money. Finally Giáp's was temporarily released. But when the criminal was

just taken his cangue off and stepped out of the government office, all of a sudden a lightning exploded in the sunny sky without cloud: Suddenly the Lightning God darted down to kill him right away. And on the way the people carried Giáp's corpse to his home, a tiger of nowhere from the bush jumped out to take his dead body and disappeared.

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32.

TO HOLD AN ARTEMISIA IN ONE'S MOUTH IN SEARCH OF AQUILARIA

EXPLANATION

Cung Tam Thanh = Tam Thanh Hall. According to Chinese and Vietnamese belief, Tam Thanh Hall is the place where all saints gather in the heaven.
Lão tổ = highest ranking saint

In days of old, in the highly mountainous region of a province in Central Vietnam there were a couple coming to make a living. They planted paddy and maize, raised chickens and swines, hunted birds, and caught hares as other families did. But, owing to

parents' heritage they lived in easy circumstances. Therefore, even though they worked hard, the couple still enjoyed their family life with a five-year-old son.

Suddenly one day an old friend came to visit him. For a long time both men had not have seen each other, so they were cheerful to shake their hands with happy faces. The friend said:

- For long I learned that you and your

wife had moved to this place; today I have something to do on this way, so I have the chance to stop by to visit. By the way, I have a pair of geese for both of you.

The host asked:

- So long I have not heard from you. So

what are you doing now?

- I'm unemployed. I do not want to hide

from you that for a long time I have striven to reach Immortality so that I can attain Enlightenment. For the last five years I stayed in one place; now I have to go to the mountains.

- Go to the mountains for what?

- To find the aquilaria. I must have to

burn the aquilaria for attaining a prayer. The aquilaria will carry it to Tam Thanh Hall. Owing to that "diverse saints" know my prayer and fulfill it.

The host also asked:

- Rolling mountains and forests,

innumerable and extensive trees, how can you find the aquilaria?

The guest answered:

- No problem. To look for the aquilaria

one must hold the artemisia in one's mouth.

After that the guest took out from his cloth-bag a small bag covered by red fabric. Just holding a little artemisia in his or her mouth, one can go in the jungle for the whole year, without fear of being harm by tigers, leopards, snakes and centipedes, without

eating and drinking anything else, and he or she also has the hope of being blessed by diverse saints to find the aquilaria. At that time one can attain what he or she wishes to be young forever and reach immortality.

The host was dazzled when he realized his old friend striving, going to succeed, surely being able to have wealth and preciousness very soon. He took a piece of artemisia up and down many times and thought: "Wow, just with this little piece I can have what I pray, I can attain immortality; oh, so much happiness I can have." In good mood he told to his friend about his life in some last years; then he urged his wife to prepare food and liquor to treat his friend. Already knowing that his guest liked to play chest, the host took out an ivory chess set to invite his guest to play. First, he chose a chess, gave to his friend, and said:

- This very valuable chess set made of ivory

was left by my predecessors. But they are less precious than this lowest ranking chessman. It was made of emerald without any flaw and it always scintillates even when it is placed in a dark corner.

The guest hold the chessman made of gem, kept examining it, realized it very precious in this world, and licked his tongue in secret praise, then said to himself: "How can I have a gem like that to offer to the Highest Ranking Saint…"

Even though both sides thought of chess tactics, deep in their mind each person planned his plot to appropriate his friend's possession: this one wanted to be the owner of the aquilaria bag; the other one, to have the gem chessman.

The good-bye day came. In the middle of the chess game, suddenly the host heard his wife calling him and he hurrily walked to the back of the house. After that, a tray of food and drink was carried out. While gathering the chess set, the guest hid the gem chessman in the sleeve of his shirt. But the guest did not expect that he would have been dispossessed. After their drink for some time, the guest lay down on the sofa. Seeing that his friend was intoxicated by his liquor mixed with sleeping medicine, the host

hurriedly foraged the cloth-bag, took the artemisia bag, and rushed to leave his house without saying good-bye to his wife and son.

The guest slept for two days, then woke up. He startled when he put his hand in the cloth-bag and could not find the precious artemisia bag anymore; he looked for his friend but he friend disappeared; he asked his friend's wife and son but no one knew where he went. So the guest left the place by himself and determined to find his friend to claim back his precious possession. From mountain to mountain, the guest climbed without rest, but he could not find the dishonest man. One day, he climbed up to the peak in viewing the far distance; but, unfortunately he slipped and fell down to the slope; the fallen gem transformed into a rock; his body, a tree and roots which always clawed the rock as if they would have wanted to protect their precious thing.

Regarding the host, leaving his house and following the instruction of his friend, he put a piece of artimesia in his mouth to look for the aquilaria. But he walked, kept walking always, and passed hundred of mountains and ravines, but he could not find any aquilaria. When he was disheartened and wanted to go back but unfortunately he could not remember the way. Year by year, gradually only a very small piece, as a fingernail, of artemisia left in the bag. He did not expect that whenever there was no more artemisia in the mouth, the holder would have transformed into a tiger. At that time the bristly hair already grew to replace wherever his clothes were torn. Then, one day he transformed into a gray tiger.

Back to his wife and son, at home they wearily waited for him. Each day their tears which ran a little bit eroded the ground becoming a spring. Finally, day by day and month by month, both of them transformed into rocks as some domestic animals and familiar utentils.

Later on, the gray tiger also found the way to his former house. From the distance he saw the his wife and son's appearances, even the dog, the chicken around them; being so happy, the tiger dashed with all speed. But when he knew that his wife, son, and domestic animals turned into rocks, he was brokenhearted, made some anguished roars, and left forever.

At the present time in Khánh Dương County, Khánh Hòa Province, there is still a rock
mountain named Mt. Mother & Son, prominently were a standing block of stone and a smaller one next to it; people called them Mother and Son. Around them there are scatteredly some other small blocks of stone; people say that those are dog, chicken, rattan basket, rice-hulling mill, mortar, pestle, riddle, broom… There are also a square slabe of stone which people say that was a chess board having many chessmen but missing a lowest ranking chessman. There is a spring named Fairy Spring which its water never runs dry and people say that it was formed by the mother and son's tears. Sometimes on the spring there were a pair of geese playing or jumping which people say that were the descendants of the pair of geese which the guest brought to give and if they did not transform into rock, it was because they had not been the host's domestic animals

And in Phú Yên Province, at Mt. Tịnh Sơn there is a round rock called Chessman Rock which people say that was the gem chessman dropped from the guest's shirt. Next to it, there is a luxuriant secular tree having rank roots, but it roots always pinch the rock which people say that
was the guest transformed into it.

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33.

EVIL DOING DOES NOT PAY

There were two poor brothers being orphaned, living together in the same house. Everyday they went fishing together to earn their living.

Everyday they usually got many fish, but today from morning until noon the buoys of their fishing canes had not been touched. Both were on the tenterhoos and hungry. The older brother planned to go back home but the younger one said in stopping the former's plan:

- I advise you to stay a little more; maybe we get something.

Evidently, staying longer for a while, each brother caught a fish. The younger brother got a big fish having silver scales. The older one got a small fish having black scales and felt unpleasant. Taking advantage of when his younger brother did not pay attention, the older one changed his small fish to his brother's basket and took the big fish to his.

Both sat to fish for a little while more, but they got nothing and they went back home. Reaching their house the older brother asked the younger one:

- Today we fish for a long time and got only two fish. We sell them or do something for now?

The younger brother took his fish out of the basket. Seeing that his fish was too small, he said:

- We will not be able to sell them, but they are too little to eat; my fish is very small, so I raise it.

Listening to his brother's words, the older one also said:

- My fish is big but it's not enough for a meal and I will not get much money to sell it. You raise the fish, so do I. When they grow big, together we eat them.

Immediately they put two fish in a wooden container. Both prepared their lunch, not thinking abouth those two fish anymore.

The next day, they went fishing as usual.

Coming back home at meal time, both were very surprised because they saw hot rice and soup already there. Both guessed that there was someone in the village who took pity on them because of their hardship, so she or he came to cook for them. They openly sat at the food tray.

Constantly some days later, each noon after their fishing, good rice and soup for both brothers were ready, they just sat and ate. They could hold their curiosity; so each one went to a different direction of their village to ask about it. The whole people in the village answered that no one had never come to cook their food. Both were very surprised; therefore, they planned to watch for knowing that strange matter where did it come from.

One early morning they pretended to go fishing. But then they came back, hiding in a bush and watching the inside of the house. Both were also amazed, almost yelling loudly, because two girls walked out from the fish container: one was ugly having pock-marked face as a beehive; one was beautiful, having the skin white as that of a peeled egg. Two girls lighted fire on the stove, cooked food, and tidily cleaned up the house. Seeing that both brothers dashed for the house. Hearing the noise, two girls hurrily jumped into the fish container. Both brothers were flabbergasted because they saw only two fish, which they caught some days ago, were frolickedly swimming.

The older brother guessed that the beautiful girl had to come from the big, pretty fish. He snatched the big fish and said to his younger brother:

- Now the fish transform into human

beings, definitely fairies want to help us. So, the fish belongs to whom will be raised by that one. You must bring your fish and go to live at a different place.

Even though the younger brother tried to convince his brother, the latter did not listen. The younger brother reluctantly brought the ugly, small fish to the front edge of the village where he built a small hut to live alone.

The older brother stayed at their old house, accepting the big fish with silver scales to be his wife. However, the big fish transformed into an indescribably ugly girl: her

face had pock-marks as those of a beehive, her eyes were exceedingly protruded as two snails, and her mouth laughed as a horse-laugh making people having a splitting headache. The older brother was very sad; but it was too late, he could do nothing.

At his new hut, the younger brother also accepted the black-scale fish to be his wife. The small fish with black scales transformed into a beautiful girl. She had a straight nose as that of the edge of a knife, her slender back as that of a cricket, and her eyes clear, black, and scintillating as that of a fairy. He was happy to have such wife. He loved his wife very much because a part from her beauty she was skillful with her hands.

Some days later, the older brother visited his brother's hut. Seeing that the latter had beautiful and skillful wife, he was jealous. He said:

- Your wife is pretty, but she does not know how to tear flaxes and make threads; my wife is better than yours.

The younger brother said:

- Your wife knows how to tear flaxes and make threads; that's very good; my wife also knows how to do those; in addition, she knows to embroider flowers and to make pretty skirts.

The older brother did not believe it; he pouted his lips and reproached his brother a lier. The latter was annoyed and said:

- If you want to know the truth, come here tomorrow morning to see. My wife always embroiders flowers on a skirt in the morning.

The next morning, the older brother came to his brother's hut very early. His footsteps made loud noise as those of a horse just being put horseshoes. The brother's wife heard his footsteps and knew that her brother-in-law came. She put away needles, threads, and the skirt, and stopped her embroidery. The older brother came in the hut and saw that his sister-in-law was doing nothing; so he called his brother and scolded him:

- Your words were wrong, you wife knows nothing about flower embroidery and skirt making! Don't deceive me; deceit is bad. Do you want to be a bad person?

Even though the younger brother was scolded by his brother and felt upset, he reluctantly kept his mouth shut. A moment later he said to his brother:

- For sure my wife does not want you to know. Definitely my wife embroiders flowers and makes skirt very good. Tomorrow early in the morning you come here and walked softly, you will see her doing exactly what I said. I lie and dupe you for what?

The older brother left the place. Early in the next morning he came back to his brother's hut. At this time he walked on tiptoe… As a matter of fact he caught his sister-in-law was embroidering a flower on the skirt. The flowers which she embroidered were very beautiful as real flowers blooming in the forest. He like and praised:

- Wow! My sister-in-law embroiders and makes a new skirt really excellent!

She could not hide from him anymore; so she reluctantly responded:

- I do not do very well!

Realizing his brother's wife was beautiful and skillful, the older brother impromptu had the idea to rob her from his brother. He thought and thought of a plot. One day, he came and induced his younger brother to go the forest to lumber. He led his brother to a very big tree. When the tree was going to fall down, he said to his brother:

- The tree is going to fall. Don't chop it anymore, just watch to know the direction it will fall then you readily put your shoulders to hold it. Also I will carry it for faster time.

The younger brother guessed a little bit his brother's evil idea. But the former said nothing; waiting until the tree was going to fall, he took off his shirt and pretended to put his shoulders under the tree. When the tree really fell, he threw the shirt under it and directly ran back home.

Seeing that the tree fell down and thinking that his brother was crushed, the older brother happily said to himself: "You're dead this time! For sure I will get your wife."

Then, having no time to see his younger brother really dead or not, he ran back, called his sister-in-laws, and asked:

- Has your husband come back yet?

She answered:

- My husband came back for a long time,

having his meal.

The older brother was surprised and looked inside; evidently his brother was sitting and eating his rice. The former directly went back to his home; being burst with suppressed anger, he spoke under his breath to himself: "Why was he not dead when I did that? Tomorrow I must ask him to saw wood."

The next morning the older brother came to his brother's hut very early. The former pretended to reproach his brother about not staying to help him to carry the tree back. The former forced his brother to go to the forest in order to saw wood for making a coffin. When they completed the job, it was dark; then the older brother said to his brother:

- You try to lie down in the coffin, watch

where there is a leak, then tell me so that I seal it.

When the younger brother just lay down in the coffin, his brother put the cover and sealed it up, not allowing his younger brother to get out anymore. In sealing the coffin, the older brother said:

- This time I let you die in the coffin; no

way you can escape. Definitely I get your wife!

After speaking he directly ran without stopping then called his sister-in-law and asked:

- Has your husband come home yet?

She answered:

- Everyday my husband already did, but

why today he has not come home.

The older brother joyfully said:

- Your husband already died; I put him in the coffin and buried it in the forest. Now I come back to take you as my wife.

Knowing that her brother-in-law had a wicked heart, she responded right away:

- No problem! My husband alreary died. It's alright for you to marry me; I accept. But you must raise a very big, fat swine; then bring it here; kill and broil it for me to eat; after eating I will marry you.

The brother was beside himself with joy and tried his best to raise a very big, fat swine. Three persons could not carry it. At that time, they carried the swine to his sister-in-law's hut, killed, and broiled it.

The sister-in-law unruffedly sat, ate, and drank, eating and smearing fat at the same time all over on the skirt. Just in no time she ate the whole broiled swine.

The brother-in-law waited for her to finish her meal then said:

- You ate all my swine; now you must marry me and go with me to my home.

She said:

- OK! I already ate all of your swine, I will marry you. But before going with you to your home, you must let me go to see how my husband died and where was he buried. If you don't lead me to go and see, I would not marry you.

The brother who was eager to sleep with his sister-in-law accepted to lead her immediately. He led his sister-in-law to the forest and the place he buried his younger brother some time ago. He prized the coffin cover and showed his brother's corpse to his sister-in-law. Seeing her husband lying in the coffin, she did not cry but only hugged him and wakened him as wakening a deep sleeper. Just after the third wakening the husband opened his eyes and rose up. He jumped out of the coffin, pulled out the jungle-knife which his wife carried behind her back, constantly chopped his wicked brother nine times. The older brother died without having enough time to yell.

After killing the bad brother, the couple came back home, living a joyful and happy life. The older brother's body lay solitary in the forest, next to the coffin which he planned to kill his kindred brother some time ago. Day by day his eyes and liver were pulled out by crows; and tigers came to eat his flesh. And everyday his bones were carried and left all over the forest by groups of ants.

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34.

CỐ GHÉP

EXPLANATION

Cố Ghép = the nickname of the old man who determined to fulfill his plan to join rocks becoming a staircase going up to Mt. Hồng Lĩnh.
Mt. Hồng Lĩnh: located in the northeast of HàTĩnh Province, southeast of Nghệ An Province.
Cố Đương = the nickname of the old man who determined to help someone in difficult situation
Vắn = Short
Truông Vắn = Short Passageway
Truông Ghép = Passageway Named Ghép

In the old times, at the foot of Mt. Hồng Lĩnh in the southeast area, there was a very very small village including some fishing families. They always lived in the roar of sea waves. But, unfortunately, one day a big storm carried away several lives and all fishing boats and nets to the bottom of the sea.

Survivors had no way to earn an income by fishing anymore; so day by day they had to go up to the mountain to gather firewoods and sold them in the market. That was the most less-capital occupation, but it was the most tiredsome job, because the slope on the side of their residence stood straight up as a wall and with a load of firewoods on their shoulders they could not climb up the mountain but to go around through many other villages. As a result, the forest was near, but the road to reach it was too far. Therefore, everyone wished how to have a passage from their village going up to the mountain so that they could go fast.

At that time in the village there was an old man living with his family in a hut. People called him Old Đương because he always helped and determined to complete the task whenever someone had a difficult matter. Seeing that people wanting to go to the forest had to go around in a very long road, Old Đương thought it was unreasonable. Often whenever having some free time, by himself he slowly held the rock tightly and climbed up trees to find the shortest way to gather firewoods.

But every time standing at the dangerously straight slope, he was always bothered and thought: "If we don't join rocks becoming a staircase, no way we would pass these slopes!" Then in that idea he asked his wife. She considered it stupid. He asked some people in the village; all of them shook their heads and said:

- Oh, Cố Đương, no way we can do. We still have to earn our daily food!

With a pensive expression, Cố Đương said to them:

- For each time I have to go through "five villages having banyan trees and three ones having thị trees" for gathering firewoods, I really get upset!"

Five months passed. Gathering firewoods became the main occupation of those failed fishing families. They were secured with their new occupation, except Cố Đương who was not really satisfied. One day he said to his wife:

- From tomorrow you try to gather firewood alone. For my part, I will find a new way to go up to the mountain. Whenever I finish it, both of us gather firewoods at pleasure.

The wife already knew her husband's character doing after saying, but this time she did her best to dissuave him from doing it:

- You shouldn't fight against the king, compete against God. You're old, going to the tomb soon, not young anymore!

However Cố Đương tried to console her:

- You shouldn't be worried! People went across very large seas. They also climbed up to the high Giăng Màn Mountains. To make this slope becoming a road is not very hard. I can do it by myself. Please be hard working for while. In the future we will double, triple firewoods more than today; at that time the whole village will be happy.
- How long do you plan to complete it?
- I cannot say in advance. If it's not done in one year, it will be in two years; if it's not done in two years, it will be in four years. If I die when the work is not completed, somebody will continue.

So, from that day everyday Cố Đương brought a bag of rice to the mountain slope. He hoed the soil. He pulled up plants. He carried rocks. And he joined rocks becoming a staircase going up to the mountain. What's a very hard job! But as a matter of fact, nothing could stop the determination of an old eagle. The more working, the more he felt strong; the more tiredness, the more he worked harder. Doing like that for five to six quarters of the moon, he kept going in the morning and coming back in the evening without fatigue. His wife could not shut her mouth anymore so one day she yelled:

- Why should you be such miserable and

should your whole family be in such poverty? A snail could not carry his own shelf, how can it carry a stake! When the road is completed, everybody can go, not for you only. No more! From now on you go wherever you want, but don't come back home anymore.

Hearing such reproach, Cố Đương tried to find better words for comforting his wife. But she deliberately discouraged him. She determined not to feed him anymore.

Since then he did not come back home anymore and built a temporary hut next to where he was working. And he moved his hut to the completed part of the staircase. Seeing that he was hungry, gibbons brought fruits to him. Seeing that he was exhausted, wild bulls and harts used their horns to move rocks in helping him. Then, in turn birds sung all day long to entertain him forgetting the hardship. Laterly there were some people voluntarily working with him. With their help, it seemed that Cố Đương increased his strength and he worked more diligent.

Constantly working like that, after tomentose rose myrtles had their fruits five times (= five years) Cố Đương already opened a passageway, a shortest way from his village to high points of Mt. Hồng Lĩnh. He joined rocks becoming staircases going up to three most difficult, dangerous slopes. The inhabitants of the village went up and down very convenient and owing to that they could gather firewoods many
times per day.

At the present time, in the south of Mt. Hồng Lĩnh, at the border of Nghi Xuân and Can Lộc counties, there is a passageway called Truông Vắn or Truông Ghép (from the name Cố Đương changed to Cố Ghép by the people used to call him after his completion of the passageway).

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35.

MOSQUITOE

EXPLANATION

Nứa = neohouzeaua (It is alike bamboo, but it is lighter and softer; and the distance between two internodes is longer than that of bamboo.)

There was a couple loving each other very much. Just being married, they swore not leaving each other. If unfortunately one of them died, the other would die along to keep company in heaven or hell.

After that not very long, the young wife died suddenly. The husband's grief was indescribable. He was going to commit suicide for some times, but his family members stopped his action and continuously watched him. When they prepared to shroud her corpse, all of a sudden a Taoist hermit came and showed him how to raise his wife from her death and according to the hermit there were many people applied that method and saved dead persons. His method was simple: it needed a little daring and patience of a living person only. That meant everyday that person hugged and transferred his warm breath to the corpse. He had to do like that everyday without interruption for approximately three months and ten days in order to revive the dead.

The husband thanked the hermit and did exactly what the latter said with the hope that he could raise his beloved wife from her death. Everyday he hugged his wife and transferred his vitality and breath to the corpse already very cold.

But after three days, the terrible smell of the corpse spread all over the hamlet and nobody could stand it. They came in group and forced him to burry her at once.

Reluctantly the husband asked his neighbors to chop and build a raft so that he moved his wife's corpse to another place. Many people was willing to help him in this matter. Only in half day he already carried his wife's corpse on the raft to go away.

On the current the raft constantly floated. Everyday the husband hugged his wife. The dead body resembled someone asleep. Deep in his heart he fully hoped that his wife would be saved. Getting to some place, he anchored the raft near a large alang grass area and went up to the land to cook his meal.

By accident while he gathered some firewood, he met an old man. He was surprised to see that the old man walked alone with his stick in the middle of a deserted place, his beard and moustaches were really white, and nothing showed his poverty and hardship in his appearance. While he was thinking, the old man already stood in front of him at no time. Knowing him a Saint or Buddha at that time, he bowed down before the old man's feet; then he told him his story, and finally he did not forget to beg the latter to save his wife's life. Realizing that he did his best to insist, Buddha—the old man was really a Buddha himself—followed him to the raft, told him to lance his finger and drop three drops of his blood into his wife's mouth. Owing to that, the woman gently moved her lips; then slowly she raised up as someone just wakening after a dream. Before leaving, Buddha asked the wife:

- This man lent you three drops of blood
for your revival. So, do you love him?

Hearing the woman's serious oath, Buddha said:

- Never mind. If you stop to love him, you
just return drops of blood to him. That's all!

Seeing that they were eager to come back to their home, Buddha called a giant crocodile from the deep cave coming up and carrying them to go back home.

The crocodile was hungry after it swam in the river for half day. It asked the couple going up to the shore to rest so that it could find something to eat. The couple went to a restaurant. There was a wealthy, elegant merchant in the restaurant. He saw the

wife's attractive beauty and suddenly he had an idea to appropriate her. He tried to approach and show them samples of silk fabric and female ornament. As a matter of fact he courted the beautiful woman. He said that in his boat anchored near by there were many very precious and cheap items which he invited them coming down to see.

But the husband did not care anything. After their meal, he left the merchant, accompanying his wife to the deserted dock where they had the appointment with the crocodile; and they sat and waited. They sat under the shade of a tree and chatted to each other for while; then, because of their tiredness, they fell into their sleeps without realizing. They did not expect that behind their backs the merchant continuously followed them. When he saw them asleep, he tiptoed and wakened the wife only then invited her coming down to the nearby boat so that he gave a very beautiful ornament to her.

- My boat is anchored only some ten meters from here. You don't have to wait for long.

Hearing that the woman was agitated. She stood up and followed the merchant to his boat. Just in the twinkling of an eye, at the merchant's secret signal, his sailors weighed anchor and unfurled sails of the boat, leaving the dock and disappearing.

Back to the crocodile, when it emerged from the river at the appointment location, it saw only the husband sleeping like a log. The crocodile wakened him and asked the reason. He was bewildered and did not know what happened. Being lost one but suspecting ten, he accused the crocodile eating his wife. To prove his wrong suspicion, it asked him to find a bamboo tree in order to put it through its mouth, to move it around in its stomach and to know what was inside. He did as it asked, but he knew that there were fish bones only; at that time, he realized that he wrongly suspected. Looking all over the places but he did not find his wife; he came back to the dock, held his head and cried bitterly. Feeling pity for him the crocodile told him to get on its back so that it carried him to pursue the boats just passing by to find out her whereabouts. After some inquiries, people informed that there was a sales boat just passing by and on it there was a young,

beautiful woman. She was exactly his wife according to their description of her figure and appearance. The crocodile tried his best to pursue it.

When the husband saw his wife sitting in the merchant's boat, he said loudly:

- You just jump down… I couldn't live away from you… I will make you happy…

But his wife responded:

- Go back home! Reluctantly I have to be unfaithful to you. So, forgive me please.

Then she gave a bag of gold to her husband:

- You accept this one and consider that I was dead some days ago.

Getting upset and being disappointed at the same time, he threw the gold bag into the river then asked the crocodile to carry him back to the Buddha. When the Buddha met them, immediately he rushed the crocodile to pursue the merchant's boat so that the love-sick guy demanded his three drops of blood.

Back to the woman, after lancing her hand to take three drops of blood in order to pay back her husband, she fell down and died instantly. The merchant did his best to save her but it was in vain. Then, afterwards he threw her corpse into the sea. However, owing to the Buddha's miracle the woman transformed into a mosquitoe. Because of her lack of blood, therefore, always the mosquitoe sneakily lances a little blood from everyone to live.

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36.

THE THỦ HUỒN PAGODA

EXPLANATION

Gia Định Province = located next to and in the east of Saigon
Quảng Yên Province = located in the far east of Ha Noi
Diêm Vương = King of Hell
Biên Hòa = located next to and in the east of Gia Định Province

In former time, in Gia Định Province, at the Governor office, there was an administrator named Thủ Huồn. Not an honest, humane person, everyday Thủ Huồn took advantage of his position, oppressed people, and put his grip on everything in order to fill up his greed only.

Normally whoever had something needed Thủ Huồn's help, the latter forced him or her to bring a bribe to him in advance. Over forty years of age, still Thủ Huồn had no childrens to carry on the lineage. In addition, suddenly Thủ Huồn's wife got a serious sickness and died.

Since then, being sad about his family situation, Thủ Huồn did not care to be an administrator anymore. He requested for his resignation; then he traveled here and there.

One day, Thủ Huồn came to Quảng Yên Province, in time of the Mạnh Ma's flea market where there were all people from this world and also from Hell coming her to buy and sell. By accident, while walking around in the market, Thủ Huồn saw his wife sitting and selling there. Thủ Huồn asked his wife about what she was doing in Hell. Sincerely his wife said that in Hell she was a wet-nurse for Diêm Vương's baby. Thủ Huồn expressed that he would like to go with her to Hell in order to satisfy his curiosity. His

wife refused two, three times, but Thủ Huồn did not listen; reluctantly she had to lead him to Hell.

Getting to Hell, Thủ Huồn expressed that he wanted to see prisons. His wife asked Diêm Vương's permission. Immediately the King of Hell commanded a devil coming and leading him to go. Thủ Huồn came to the door of a prison and saw a big cangue; he wondered that who would be punished and there was no one being carried it at that time. So he inquired and the warden answered:

- This cangue is ready-made to put on Thủ Huồn.

Hearing his name, Thủ Huồn was extremely horrified, but in strain he continued his inquiry:

- So where is Thủ Huồn residing? In his world what crimes did he commit to be received such punishment?

The warden checked his ledger then answered:

- Thủ Huồn is residing in Gia Định Province; he was an administrator at the Governor office who took advantage of his power to oppress powerless people. Just because of money he made innocent people dead instead of living, good things becoming bad ones; he was a very bad loan shark; he did many inhumane, ingrateful matters. So many people complainted; also there were many plaintiffs against him; all of his crimes were clearly registered here.

Thủ Huồn sweated on his forefront and thought that his shady actions in the past which nobody knew, but they were registered clearly and exactly at the Hell Prison; so, after his death he had come down to Hell and he would be very miserable. Thủ Huồn was in repentance and asked at the same time:

- Thủ Huồn committed crimes, was his wife accused or not?

The warden said:

- The husband who did has to pay the

consequence, but his wife is not guilty; the laws is always fair like that, why should you ask?

Again Thủ Huồn asked the warden:

- What he or she has to do if a person who committed such crimes want to erase them?

The warden answered:

- To erase crimes, he or she has to change from bad to good, to be a benefactor, to do charitable works, to help poor people, not to kill animals, and essentially he or she tries to be a good-natured person and to strike for self-improvement; owing to that perhaps a criminal could be pardonable.

Immediately Thủ Huồn bade farewell to the warden; then in a rush he looked for his wife and told her to bring him back to the world.

From the Mạnh Ma Market, Thủ Huồn came back to Gia Định right away. Then, Thủ Huồn invited bonzes to establish platform and alta with vegetarian food to relieve the victims' soul of injustice, and he took 90 percent of his corrupt money to give away by helping the poor and making small bridges and sewers; and he did not refuse to exercise any charitable works.

Some years later, Thủ Huồn came back to the Mạnh Ma Market, looked for his wife, and asked her to lead him to Hell one more time. Thủ Huồn came to Hell's door to see how the cangue looked, and he saw the cangue was smaller than before nine times.

Thủ Huồn was very happy and thought that his good actions were effective; then he asked the warden:

- Why the cangue was big before but now it is so small like that?

The warden answered:

- Because lately in his world Thủ Huồn has done many charitable works, his crimes have decreased; therefore, the cangue changes from big to small.

Thủ Huồn came back to his world; again he cooked vegetarian food and praised to release dead souls, did charitable works, made a raft floating on the river to give money and rice, and built a pagoda in Biên Hòa then he entered monkhood.

Now, the Thủ Huồn Pagoda is still in Biên Hòa.

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37.

YOUNG GUY NAMED LÙN

EXPLANATION

Lùn = a very short person or a dwarf

In the past there was the wife of a couple being pregnant when they were old. Not very long later the husband died. Seven months later the widow gave birth to a boy. The infant's four limbs were too short. She had not known what should he be named so she called him Lùn.

Growing up, Lùn was very strong. He did not know what to do for his occupation besides everyday he went to the forest to gather firewoods. However, he could carry so many of them. One of his load could be used more than a year.

Hearing that Lùn was a good firewood carrier, a rich man in the village came to hire Lùn. He said:

- If you carry firewood enough for my house to use everyday, I feed both of you, mother and son.

Lùn accepted. Just coming last afternoon, in the next morning the rich man already said to Lùn:

- Today my house has no more firewood to burn, you find firewoods for my house at once.

Lùn said nothing but carried his axe to the forest immediately. However, in the evening it was dark and no one saw Lùn coming back; being in a fret, the rich man said to Lùn's mother:

- Your son was a good firewood cutter, but why today he has not come back yet even though it is very dark? Or he was eaten by tigers, bears!

Hearing what the rich man said, Lùn's mother was more worried, then she cried loudly. All of a sudden there was a very strong, loud sound outside of the door. After dropping his load of firewoods on the front yard, Lùn ran into the house and asked:

- Has everybody in the house had supper yet? Why are you crying?

The rich man ran to the front yard to see how many firewoods Lùn carried back. He was very surprised because he saw firewoods thrown all over his large front yard. While Lùn having his dinner the mother asked him why he came back home so late. In low voice, Lùn spoke to his mother:

- In the morning when I came to the forest, suddenly I saw a very big striped snake carried by holding against his lips a very beautiful girl. With my axe already in my hand I chopped its head once. The snake did not die, still carrying the girl and running. I traced its blood on three hills, seven fields

and knew that it went down to a deep cave in the forest. I came back to gather firewoods that why I came back so late.

Without telling to anyone, the mother and son kept the story in secret. Everyday Lùn still came to the forest.

Some days later, the King announced to everybody that he just lost his daughter and that whoever knew whom or what animal kidnapping her will be received a big reward, or whoever found or saved her would be granted to be her husband.

Hearing the King's announcement, the rich man talked to his wife:

- This time if I find the king's daughter,

would you agree with me to marry her?

The rich man's wife spoke in sarcasm:

- People have thousands of ears and eyes

but they find nothing; you have only two ears and two eyes, how can you?

The rich man determined:

- Don't be worried. Lùn is very good. Let

me go to ask him and see what happens?

The rich man went to ask Lùn. He sincerely told him everything about he chopped the snake. The rich man was very happy. He though of a plot then talked to his wife:

- Lùn knows where the girl in trouble.

tomorrow I dupe him to go down the cave, save, and let the king's daughter to go up, then I pull rocks to cover the cave.

His wife said:

- You are so ambitious, already having

eight wives, do you still want more? Lùn saves the king's daughter, let him marry her.

The rich man did not listen. Waiting for the next morning, he woke Lùn and followed Lùn to the entrance of the cave.

In the night before Lùn's mother said to him:

- My dear son! I heard the rich man

Couple discussed and planned that tomorrow you lead him to look for the king's daughter; after saving her, he will marry her and kill you. I have you only as a tree having only one branch. Don't go to let me live alone.

Lùn said to his mother:

- Don't be worried. Let me go because saving a human life is what I must do.

Very early in the next morning the rich man rushed Lùn to lead him in order to search the king's daughter. At the entrance of the cave, the rich man said:

- I use the big cord to drop you down. Whenever you find the king's daughter, you tie her with it, then shook it to make a signal, I will pull her up. When she is out of the cave, I again drop the cord down to pull you up.

Lùn listened to him and let him drop Lùn down to the cave. Just reaching the bottom of the cave, Lùn saw a beautiful girl but her face was scared and pale. She stood into a crouch on the side; near her, a giant striped snake curled itself in sleep. Seeing Lùn, she asked Lùn immediately:

- What are you doing to come down here?

Lùn answered in very soft voice:

- I came down to save the king's daughter!

The girl said:

- You can't you. It is very good; who touches it, it just wriggled its tail violently to cover nine corners. An ant also must die even though it hides in its hole.

Lùn said:

- Don't be feared. I kill the snake to save you. You just sit down at one place; don't run to other place.

After his words, gingerly Lùn walked to the snake, held his axe up and just once chopped its body whose was cut off into two parts; and he ran and hugged the girl. Both

sat down without moving. Even being chopped and died, its tail was still in agony and waggled violently all over nine corners of the cave, except where both were sitting.

A while later, the snake was totally dead; Lùn led the girl to the entrance of the cave and said:

- I tie you with the cord so that someone pull you up in advance; then he will drop the cord down again and pull me up.

The girl said:

- I don't want to go up when you stay down here.

Lùn said:

- I'm afraid that the cord will break if both of us go up at the same time. You should go up first to see your father waiting for you.

The girl did not know how to say anything more; so she looked for her brooch and broke it into two parts; then she gave him one part and said:

- This is something to prove. You keep half of it and I keep the other half. In the future, in meeting we will join them together in order to recognize each other.

Lùn held half of the brooch, took the cord, tied the girl, and shook the cord some times so that the rich man above the entrance of the cave to pull her up.

Seeing the cord shaken, the rich man pulled the girl up; then he moved rocks to seal the entrance of the cave. Waiting for a long time and seeing no cord to drop down, Lùn knew that the rich man sealed the cave and stole the girl. Lùn tried many ways to get out of the cave, but it was too deep to climb up. At meal time Lùn used a knife to cut the snake meat and ate. But after two days only he could not continue to eat the rotten snake meat anymore. Lùn had to hunt all small creatures and insects in the cave and ate them to relieve his hunger pain.

After that, with all of his strength Lùn tried to destroy the cave to have an exit. While he was moving a big block of stone, suddenly from a corner of the cave there was an echo of a voice:

- Who is such talented? Save me, I will save you.

Hearing the voice, Lùn thought: "Snake again, snake again. I will have snake meat. Luckily I'm hungry."

The human voice echoed again:

- I'm just the God's son being held in custody here. Help me, please!

Using his axe, Lùn levered the block of stone; immediately a dragon as a snake crawled out, illuminating the whole cave. The dragon was very long: it crawled for while before Lùn saw its tail. Just coming out of the cave, the dragon crept to the sea right away. All of a sudden Lùn saw a handsome young man emerging from the sea. The young man came to Lùn and said:

- You are my benefactor. You helped me getting out of confinement in the cave. Now I would bring you go to God's place.

Lùn questioned:

- Why we go to God's place?
- I'm God's son who went to do business in the dragon kingdom. The Dragon King forced me to be his son-in-law, but I refused; so he held me in custody in the cave. You follow me; I will lead you go by maritime way to the sea; then I will bring you go up to the God's place in order to visit my father.

Lùn listened to him. The young man and Lùn reached the God's place. The young man requested God for rewarding his benefactor who saved him. God gave to Lùn many golds, silvers, water buffaloes, fabrics, etc., but Lùn refused all. In the day going to leave the God's place, the young man said to Lùn that:

- You saved me from death; my father gave you many things but you didn't accept anything; so now I give you a duck and three tubes of grasshoppers; you bring them to your world; someday you will need them.

Lùn brought the duck and grasshoppers to his world and looked for the direction leading to his mother. On his way, Lùn hold the duck in one hand and three tubes of grasshoppers in the other one. For the whole day he always walked; he feet were tired and he was hungry. Sitting in resting on the side of the road, Lùn though: "It would be very happy if I have some food to eat!"

Too exhausted, Lùn just felt into sleep. At that time the duck quacked three times. Lùn opened his eyes and he did not see his duck anymore, instead a beautiful girl sitting in a simple, small restaurant in front of his eyes. The girl said:

- Please come in to have some rice. I'm "the duck"!

Lùn answered:

- I have no money. How can I pay after having your rice?

The girl brightly invited:

- You just come in to have food; I don't take your money.

After eating, Lùn looked for three tubes of grasshoppers but he found three emty ones only. The girl asked him to put these tubes upside down on the ground and to close his eyes then he would see them. Lùn followed her direction. After opening his eyes and holding the tubes up, Lùn saw innumerable water buffaloes, cows, horses, goats, chickens, pigs coming out from the tubes. Lùn look the girl, but she was not in the restaurant anymore, instead she sat at a weaving loom in a magnificent, splendid mansion. In smiling the girl said to Lùn:

- I'm the God's daughter coming down her to marry you.

Lùn could not resist anymore and consented to marry her. Since then the couple was happy and lived very harmoniously; Lùn loved his wife so much, always hanging around her without leaving her any moment. One day Lùn's wife said to him that:

- You must go to work to earn our living.

Our fortune was big, but without working it will be gone and we will be hungry.

Lùn said:

- If going to work, I miss you very much;

so I can't do it.

His wife said:

- Tomorrow you go to the rice field. If

You miss me, bring along my picture and put it at the edge of the field.

In the next day Lùn brought along his wife's picture and fixed it at the edge of his field so that sometimes he watched it to sooth his missing mood. The edge of his field leaked. At the same time Lùn filled the leak with mud and looked up to watch his wife's picture. Suddenly a gust of wind from the distance came and carried the picture away. Lùn was very sad and told her about it when he had come back home. His wife said:

- Let it be if it was lost! I was not

supposed to come down here to be your wife for very long time. My father allowed me to come down here to help you having house, garden, field, animals only, then I have to come back to God's place.

Hearing that, Lùn was more sad. His sadness was not gone after two, three market days.

When the picture of Lùn's wife was carried away by the wind, the rich man's servant accidentally picked it up and showed it to his master. After the rich man saw the picture of a very beautiful woman which he had never seen before, he ordered his servant to go around and investigate to know where the woman in the picture lived. After his

investigation, the servant knew the beautiful woman was Lùn's wife. The rich man commanded his servants to carry him by palanquin to Lùn's house and said to him:

- I heard that your wife is very beautiful;

ask her to come out here for me to see.

Just at the moment Lùn's wife came out; the rich man saw her who was the most beautiful woman in the world. His sexual ambition exploded; he said to Lùn in a gentle voice:

- Let's exchange our wives!

Lùn responded:

- No exchange!

Lùn's wife said immediately:

- Please just exchange!

Again Lùn said:

- I do not agree to exchange!

The rich man changed another plot:

- I have nine wives; all of my wives

are beautiful. Can I exchange my mansion and nine wives with you for your wife only?

Still Lùn determined not to exchange.

Lùn's wife whispered at his ear:

- You just consent it. My father allowed

me to help you then I have to go back, not to stay with you forever. Accept it, please!

Lùn listened to his wife and agreed with the rich man about his wife's exchange. The rich man called his nine wives to come and said:

- I want to exchange my nine wives with

Lùn for his wife. Who likes to be his wife?

The ninth wife who was the princess recognized Lùn saving her in the cave some years ago; so she answered right away:

- I agree to marry Lùn.

Lùn saw the rich man's nine wife who was familiar to him so he remembered their old story then asked:

- Do you remember me?
- I still remember very much. You yourself was the man who saved me in the striped snake's cave.

Then they took out and joined two parts of the brooch which fitted each other exactly. Both looked each other with tears welling in their eyes. The rich man saw that; so he said:

- Both had a love affair before. So marry each other. Exchange! Exchange!

Completing his words, the rich man ordered his servants to carry Lùn and nine wives to his mansion to manage everything. At that time Lùn looked at his "duck" wife and did not have the heart to leave. Knowing his sentiment, the "duck" wife whispered to Lùn:

- When you go to the foot of the mountain, you say that you forgot your towel to clean your face; then you come back her to talk with me some sentences. When you go to the mountain pass, you say that you forgot your pair of shoes and you come back here to look each other some moment then leave.

Remembering his wife's instructions, at the foot of the mountain he asked servants to bring his palanquin back to take his towel. At his previous house, Lùn saw his saw his "duck" wife using her supernatural power to kill the evil rich man. After that they talked to each other some sentences. And Lùn came back to the servants for a short distance; then Lùn pretended to say to the servants that he forgot his precious pair of shoes and he had to come back to pick it. But, at this time Lùn did not see his "duck" wife anymore; Lùn looked at the direction of his previous house: there was just a plain ground.

Since then Lùn had nine wives, a mansion, and everything belonged to the rich man.

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38.

THE GRAND MAYOR TIGER OF CHÂU BÌNH

EXPLANATION

Nam Kỳ Lục Tỉnh = six provinces at the end of South Vietnam

Ba Tri = a county belonged to Bến Tre Province located approximately 90km from Saigon

Grand mayor = according to the local customs, the grand mayor was the leader of the village committee

Cây đa = a kind of perennial tree usually planted at the entrance or exit of a village or at a temple/pagoda in Viet Nam in the past centuries.

About 200 years ago, the region of Ba Tri in Bến Tre Province was the one with dense, gloomy forests. Tigers, panthers, and often wild animals were on the watch to catch water buffalos, cows, swines, and also human beings to eat. Everyone lived in anxiety and fear.

From Châu Bình to Bảo Thạnh forests, tigers roared all day and night. The villagers were frightened and prepared to defend themselves. However, with the time the people were gradually accustomed to those roars. In the flock of tigers, there was a biggest one; perhaps it was the leader. It often went back and forth in the areas of Châu Bình, Tân Xuân, and Bảo Thạnh and killed animals and people.

Since the foundation of the village, all people who were selected to be the grand mayor of Châu Bình Village died of sicknesses. Therefore, the position "grand mayor" was vacant for some years. Then after that there was a person was recommended to fill in this position and that person was daring to acception the recommendation. The villagers were worried for the sake of his life. Two, three days passed and he was healthy as usual. But, in one night, in his good sleep, suddenly he heard a loud walking echo in the yard, followed by scratching sound on the wall made of wood. When he just opened his eyes, an unspeakably big tiger already sneaked in the house and opened its wide jaws, and he was unconscious immediately… After waking up, he saw that he was lying at the root of "cây đa" and there were a lot of blood on his body.

After the incident, he resigned. So there was one more time nobody dared to accept the position as the grand mayor.

All village officials assembled, discussed, and discovered the will of the leading tiger; therefore, they unaminously recommended that tiger to be the grand mayor. The recommending ceremony strangely processed: in correct clothing, all village officials assembled before the village "cây đa" and invited the leading tiger to accept the honorary

title as the grand mayor; the recommending credential was written on red paper, rolled, and put inside a bamboo pipe next to a roasted head of a pig.

In that night, the leading tiger of Châu Bình Village came, ate all the roasted head, and carried the credential.

Exactly on the reelection day, the leading tiger came back to the village and returned the recommending credential at the root of "cây đa;" the people opened it and saw the mark of the tiger's foot on it. Since then the village officials continued to recommend the leading tiger to be their grand mayor. And "cây đa" became a sacred place; the villagers contributed their money to build a shrine to worship the Grand Mayor Tiger.

The time passed more than six, seven years.

At the reelection time of the grand mayor, the villagers still organized the ceremony as other years. But they did not know why the leading tiger did not come back to enjoy the offering and to return the last year recommending credential. One more year, the Grand Mayor Tiger of Châu Bình Village still did not come back. The people guessed that the leading tiger was old and died somewhere in the forest. Since then, the villagers dared to elect someone to be in charge of that position.

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39.

STUDENT'S GRATITUDE

TO TEACHER

EXPLANATION = GIẢI THÍCH

Nghệ An = a very big province located in the Center of Vietnam, in the middle of Hanoi and Hue
Thám hoa = an academic degree (classified after doctorate and "bảng nhãn" degrees) in the king's examination
Bảng nhãn = an academic degree (classified after doctorate, but before Thám hoa) in the king's examination
Tuần phủ = similar to county chief
Hưng Yên = a very small province located in the southeast of Ha Noi

In former times, Mr. Nguyễn Đức Đạt, born in Nghệ An, formerly taught students; then he was a thám hoa holder and was tuần phủ of Hưng Yên County. At that time, there was a rebellion in the country; people were devastated and robbed. He was losing more than ten thousand coins in the county bank. The government demanded him to pay it all, if not he would be punished.

While he was very sad and thinking how to have money to pay, there were strange people asking to see him. These people folded their arms in front of their chests, standing around him and a representative said:

- We are your former students. Now we are hearing that you are in big trouble; therefore we contribute money together, some a lot and some a little according to their capacity, to help you. Then, please accept our

contribution so that we are very happy. Your favor was so much. We could never pay it all.

At first, he refused, but the students kept insisting to him to accept the money. Finally, he was moved to overflow some tears in his eyes and said:

- You are people having moral debt to me.

So I thank all of you. Your upright and kind-hearted action will be a precious lesson for future people.

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40.

LÂM SANH & XUÂN NƯƠNG

Once upon a time, the more, Lâm Phụng, the provincial governor of Châu Thai, was famous for his gentleness and virtue, the more his lady named Lý Phi Sương was notorious for her wickedness.

When the provincial governor passed away, the lady married her son named Lâm Sanh to Xuân Nương. But the lady did not permit them to sleep together as husband and wife because she considered Xuân Nương as a maid. Loving his wife and avoiding his mother, Lâm Sanh sneakily met his wife in the back of their house to encourage her and to lament for their situation.

There was not any news since Xuân Nương had been the Lâm family's daughter-in-law for three years; it made the old firewood cutter couple more worry. The couple ploughed a long way to Châu Thai to visit their daughter.

Seeing that the couple was poor, the lady openly looked them down and received them with a frigid attitude. After a long moment, the lady then let Lâm Sanh accompany Xuân Nương to greet her parents. The couple was in shock, could not open their mouths when they saw Xuân Nương emaciated with torn clothes. The firewood cutter demanded to take her daughter back home, but the lady did not permit…

Not be able to take Xuân Nương back, the couple desolately went home, but their old hearts were broken.

Immediately after that, the lady angrily shouted:

- Xuân Nương! What did you libel me to your parents so that they fiercely demanded to take you back?

- Please forgive me, Mother. I did not dare to do that.

- Bad girl, don't pass me sneakily! Servant, beat her up.

The servant did not dare to disobey the order and beat Xuân Nương until the lady vented her anger. Then Xuân Nương was already a dead meat.

Returning home, the old firewood cutter couple was very sad and filled with pity for their daughter encounting a wicked mother-in-law. Suddenly one night, while sleeping they saw Xuân Nương appeared to inform: "Oh my dear parents! My mother-in-law ordered the servant to beat me to death then buried my corpse at the edge of the rice field. I can return to visit you in the long, cold night only."

The couple just had enough time to scream: "Oh my daughter Xuân Nương!" then they sat up like a spring, looked each other and cried out loud.

The more they loved their daughter, the more they were angry at the lady whose personality was virulent and fiendish. The couple sued the lady in the county court. But

the county chief already received the lady's bribe; therefore, he judged unfairly to the couple.

- Your daughter was sick and dead suddenly while the Lady Lâm loved her daughter-in-laws so much, the lady wouldn't kill her, you should forget about it.

Not being able to put their case about an injustice suffered at the county, the couple determined to bring their case to the higher level. Being urged by the love for their daughter, the couple went through thousand dangerous miles, and directly got to the king's court to file the case. After viewing it, the King ordered the Justice Department to take care of the case. The King called on Lâm Sanh and forged him to tell the truth. Evidently the lady committed a crime, the King ordered to bring her to execution ground to chop her head off to admonish wicked people.

Being pushed by filial piety, Lâm Sanh was fearless of death to dart into the execution ground and he carried his mother to escape. But, on the way Lâm Sanh was exhausted and felt down. The security general ,who had led his soldier to pursuit them, caught both mother and son and brought them back to the king's court.

The King had been in rage, ordered to chop the lady's head right away and to put Lâm Sanh into prison for judgment day.

In one moonlighted night, the princess leisurely took a walk in the garden; all of a sudden she saw a dazzling bright halo coming from a dark jail. The princess was stunned; she and her maid went to the source to examine and they saw a very handsome young man…

Getting into the king's court, the princess presented to her king father about the extraordinairy thing that she just saw. The King ordered the guard to get into the cell and to lead Lâm Sanh to meet him. To test Lâm Sanh's literature skill, the King gave the

subject. Lâm Sanh received a flower-filigreed paper, wrote his composition, and submitted it to the King. After reading, the King praised him very much.

The King ordered to pardon Lâm Sanh and to permit him to be a candidate of the examination. Lâm Sanh was the first-rank doctorate and he was married the princess.

After his high accomplishment, Lâm Sanh returned to Châu Thai to visit his home. But, not very long time there was the king's messenger to recall him to come back to the capital. When passing by Xuân Nương's tomb, Lâm Sanh displayed some offerings and prayed. Again the king's messenger urged him to go, so he reluctantly left the place.

Lâm Sanh's faithfulness impressed God. Xuân Nương's spirit entered the body of someone at a small shrine, awaiting to unite with her parents.

One day the firewood cutter couple went down to the capital to visit Lâm Sanh. On the way they saw a girl. The wife raised her voice:

- It's strange! Oh my dear, I think this girl looks alikeXuân Nương as like as two peas!

Her husband did not believe and he thought somebody looks alike someone because there is no way a dead person to revive. But Xuân Nương recognized her parents and hugged her mother in happiness and tears.

When reaching the capital, the couple immediately accompanied Xuân Nương to Lâm Sanh's residence. The firewood cutter tested Lâm Sanh:

- This is Liễu Hoa, Xuân Nương's younger sister. Now since the sister has been dead, she would replace her sister.

But Lâm Sanh replied:

- My dear father-in-law, I never dare to break my vow to Xuân Nương, making the dead feeling self-pity. Xuân Nương is my real wife.

Please excuse me, my father-in-law.

Without a word the old firewood cutter praised Lâm Sanh who was a true gentleman, always faithful. At that time Xuân Nương was impressed and told him all of the story.

The next day, Lâm Sanh led Xuân Nương to meet the King and presented everything. The King advised Lâm Sanh to manage how to be faithful with both Xuân Nương and the princess' loves. And after that, thinking himself was old and feeble, the King selected a good day to transfer the crown to Lâm Sanh, his first-rank doctorate and also his son-in-law.

Lâm Sanh appointed both the princess and Xuân Nương equal queens.

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41.

THE BROOM

EXPLANATION

Ngọc Hoàng = God's name according to theVietnamese language

Tết Nguyên Đán = Vietnamese New Year, often after the Western New Year about one month, based on the lunar calendar

In the olden times, in God's palace there was a female chef very skillful. She made excellent cakes and delicious meals to such an extent that anyone who tasted them just a little bit could not forget them. Therefore, Ngọc Hoàng assigned her to be his chef in God's kitchen. But she often ate his food sneakily and she was greedy. According to God's rule, his servants had their own food, especially not to touch his meals, even his leftovers. But that rule could not hinder whom craved for food and drink. The female chef always found a way to steal Ngọc Hoàng's meals.

In addition, even though she already passed her youth, she loved an old horse caretaker in God's palace. The life of a horse caretaker in God's palace was hard and miserable as that of in our world. He liked liquors; and since he met the woman, he was covetous for delicious food. She was completely infatuated by him so she thought no man could be better than him. Everytime seeing that he craved for food, she did not hesitate anything. Already many times she stole meat and drink in God's kitchen, hiding and giving them to him. Also a lot of occasions she led him slip into the liquor cellar so that he drank as much as he could.

One day Ngọc Hoàng planned to have a banquet to treat his courtiers. She and other cooks were very busy. All meals were completely prepared at dusk only. Then, when the moonlight in the full-moon night brightened, everybody would have begun to seat at tables.

But, at the time the meal plates were put on trays, she heard the old horse caretaker's singing voice from the distance. She knew that he was looking for her. In a rush she came out and led him to hide in the dark corner behind the food safe. She gave him some cups of liquor, the best kind in God's palace; then, she came back to complete the last almond cake.

Before that time the old man just came back from washing horses at the river watering place. Holding his mouldy rice bowl, suddenly he remember that meat and liquor were certainly profuse at God's kitchen at the same time; therefore, he slipped into here. In the dark he swallowed the first cup of liquor in pleasure. In fact, the liquor was

more than excellent; the liquor ferment made him dizzy a little bit. All of a sudden he craved for some food to eat and drink at the same time. In the dark, on trays being put near him there were so many tasty meal plates. Being hungry, he took off tray covers and groped for food as fast as he could with his hand.

When servants without notice carried out the trays of Ngọc Hoàng's meal, it seemed that someone already tasted each one of them. Seeing that, Ngọc Hoàng could not held his anger. Ngọc Hoàng furious shouting made everyone scared. As a result, the banquet lost its pleasantness. The female bowed her head down to confess her guilt. And after that both were banished to our world to transformed into brooms so that they had to work without holiday from year to year and they had to find their own food in dirty garbage of our world. That was the most serious pusnishment in God's court which they had to bear.

For a very long time later, two criminals expressed their hardships that they always had to work all year round without any day of rest. Having pity on them, Ngọc Hoàng ordered them to have three holidays each year. Those three days have been those of Tết Nguyên Đán. Consequently, since then in Tết Nguyên Đán, people have the custom not to sweep their houses in the first three days of the new year.

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42.

DOG GHOSTS

In former times there was an old couple of woodcutter having an attractive daughter. Due to the overwhelming love to their daughter they went to the forest to cut down trees in planning to build a new room for her to live. In the forest, they witnessed three dogs (white, yellow, and black) that fought each other. Finally, all of them died, transforming into a strange small tree blooming blue, white, red flowers.

Being very surprised, the old couple took up the tree and planted it in the front yard of their house. Some days later, the tree withered up slowly then died. The couple cut it down then made it becoming the door bolt of their daughter's room.

Unexpectedly the dogs' souls still prowled about the door bolt. One night they transformed into three handsome young men in order to seduce her. The daughter yelled for help, but they still continued to bother her. Hearing his daughter's yelling, in a rush the woodcutter ran to her door and strongly beat on the door. Dog ghosts disappeared.

The next dusk, there was a student coming to the couple's house and he requested for an overnight stay. The couple suspected that he was one of the ghost dogs and refused. The student explained:

- I come here to punish them. You will see it tonight.

In the evening those ghost dogs appeared again, transforming into three elegant students… Immediately that student held his magical butcher's knife, chased them, and chopped one of their legs. Seeing clearly, it was a dog's leg.

The couple and the daughter thanked the student many times. He said:

- I would like to have that door bolt.

The woodcutter consented. The student put the bolt behind his back and he heard an echoed voice:

- Please release us! We will give you a reward and we promise that from now on we would not dare to make any more trouble in this world.

The student agreed. Those ghost dogs gave him a black horse running very fast. Owing to that horse, lately he came to the king's palace and he caught the king's attention; then the King assigned him a high position in the court and he enjoyed his rich and powerful life until his death.

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43.

THE FROG

EXPLANATION:

Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva = According to Buddhist belief, this is the name of a female low-ranking Buddha. However, she is verypopular because whenever people are in trouble, they pray her name for help.

Thiên Trúc = Thiên Trúc Ngũ Sơn = the Five Mountains of India in which the Buddha assembles his disciples.

Amitabha Buddha = According to Buddhist belief, this is the name of a Buddha. He takes care everything in this world.

Kinh Kim Cang = Kim Cang Kinh = the Diamond Sutra; first translated into Chinese Kumarjava, later by others.

In the old times, there was a young bonze famous for his real monkhood. He resolutely determined to control all "sensual desires" and he concentrated to the nihility of meditation only. Hearing his reputation, the King who respected the bonze very much summoned him to the court, assigned him as the King's Advisor, and ordered to repair a pagoda located in the south of the capital for him to be its bonze superior. But the bonze politely refused the King's grace and he requested for visiting pagodas and landscapes in the country.

One day, the bonze was by himself on the way to look for a distant pagoda in the North. In that pagoda, there was a bonze superior being his friend whom he had not seen for a long time.

Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva heard the bonze's reputation. That time, on the occasion of his travel, she planned to test his monkhood. If he was a real monk, she would have brought him to Thiên Trúc to become a Buddha.

When the bonze was going to cross a big river, she transformed into a very beautiful girl pushing a long, big rod of bamboo in the river to move her small boat landing on the dock and she waited for passengers. On that day, also with her miracle, the section of that river was deserted; very few people and boats passed by.

When the bonze came into the boat hold under a roof, the girl took off her rod and moved the boat by oars to the middle of the river. Then she steered the boat to a yellow-sand dune along the river and landed there. The bonze was surprised and asked why she did not go directly to the other side of the river. Just waiting for that question, the girl took her hands off from oars, laughing romantically; then she also came into the hold of the boat and shamelessly answered that she saw the bonze too handsome so she landed here to beg him for some love. Used to hear that there were many terrible girls in this region, he sternly changed his face and said:

- Amitabha Buddha! I wish you, a human being, spare this monk.

But the boat girl did not spare him and she intentionally moved closer to attract him sexually. The bonze did not say anything, but quietly opened his handbag, took out a book entitled Kim Cang Kinh, and prayed. More and more the bonze's voice was louder than that of the boat girl. But she still laughed and talked. Then she covered the book with her hand. The bonze turned his head towards the outside of the boat
then severely warned:

- Amitabha Buddha! On my body there is
an imperial mandate in which the Emperor ordered that anyone who touches my body will be beheaded. So, I expect you not to offend the Emperor's rule.

The bonze's threat did not discourage the boat girl anything. She said:

- I'm wanting to die now! I just hope you
love me a little bit then I accept to die in satisfaction.

But for a long moment, seeing that the bonze did not change his mind, the boat girl applied another plot trying to seduce him as she could. She began to take off her blouse. When her bra having the shape of a swallow tail was dropped down, the bonze closed his eyes. He turned to his handbag, took his Buddhist chasuble, and covered her body with it. In the cramped hold of the boat, the bonze's hand still counted his string of beads and his mouth softly recited prayers. At the same time the girl's voice were like honeyed words pouring into his ears:

- Please love me a little bit… You look
outside: No one is there at all…

But she was in vain.

Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva was very
impressed. She thought that Buddha's followers as such bonze were worth to have sits in Nirvana. However, to test someone she had to go until the end. At the ninth attack, the girl was still refused. The beautiful, young girl's breathing wafted on the bonze's cheeks but his features did not change.

But, at the tenth attack, the girl did not expect that the strong rampart as she thought was unexpectedly fallen down. All of a sudden the bonze's hand put on her body. Alas! Only at the last minute the bonze threw away his more-than-twenty-year monkhood.

At that time Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva was displeased. What a pity! The bonze lost his endurance before the seducing power of "sensual desires"; and in such circumstance, the bonze's previous excellent reputation was not worth to be taken into account. Therefore, she took the bonze's neck, immediately threw him into the river like people throwing a piece of garbage, and transformed him into a frog. Consequently, today people say that the descendants of the frog still keep their originator's habit, for example, when they are beheaded, they held their front legs together like persons clasping their hands in praying.

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44.

THE "FOX" OF RẠCH GIÀ

EXPLANATION

Rạch Già = old stream = old, very small river
Gị Cơng = It was formerly a province; now it belongs to
Tiền Giang Province.

Tiền Giang Province = located in the southwest of Saigon
after Long An Province
Cĩc = toad
Cĩc tree = a kind of tree in delta forest

Located after Cĩc Forest, the jungle was a range of dense, immense forests covering the whole easthern seashore of Gị Cơng, Tiền Giang Province. In the jungle, from Tân Phước Village approximately 3km, there was a very small river called Rạch Già.

At that time, there was a family professionally cutting trees to sell to people using them as columns or fences for their houses. It usually took two to three days each time for them going to the jungle. Therefore, each time coming down to the boat to go, they brought along complete tools, food, and drink.

One day, they rowed their boat out of Rạch Già, moving along the forest skirting the seashore, and reaching the end of a very small river. Seeing a dense forest with many cĩc, date-palm trees which they liked, they turned their boat to that very small river and bound the boat cord at the root of a tree.

Three men carried their hammers, axes, and jungle knives to hew down trees, only leaving a young woman in the boat to cook their food. Knowing that there were wild beasts in the forest, they did their job and warned each other; and once in while they watched the boat bound at the small river.

While looking for more trees to cut down, the eldest brother glanced at the boat and suddenly he saw on the bank of the river there was a tiger walking back and forth, staring at the boat, and thinking of the way to get to the boat. Fortunately at that time the tide was low, the boat was far from the bank; the tiger kept walking back and forth on the muddy edge of the river, not daring to go down to reach the boat.

The eldest brother saw the smoke coming up from the boat and also the woman

bending to put some sticks of wood into the stove as usual in other days. So happy he called her loudly:

- Hey! Aunt Năm! Are you down there?
- Yes, I am!
- What are you doing?
- I'm boiling some water.
- Have you seen a "fox" on the edge of the river?
- Yes! I thought it's a bulky dog of someone!
- Oh, the "fox" is very big. Is the water boiled? You throw the boiled water kettle on the head of that "fox" in order to chase it away.
- Really?!

After her words, she took the boiled water kettle and strongly threw it to the edge of the river; and luckily it hit the face of the "fox." The boiled water burned its face; being too hot, he ran away in its heart throbbing wildly.

Right away, in a hurry the three brothers carried their tools back to their boat, unleashed the boat cord, punted the boat, and left the place at once.

Realizing that his inexperienced sister-in-law did not know the reason, the eldest brother-in-law tried to ask her:

- Aunt Năm, up to now have you seen a tiger yet?

The brand new sister-in-law just came to live with her husband family and that was the first time she went to the forest; hearing about tiger, she answered:

- I heard, but I have never seen one.

The eldest brother burst out of laughing and said:

- The “fox” before was the tiger!

The sister-in-law was very surprised; her face turned pale, expressing panic. In half smiling the eldest brother-in-law said:

- At that time, if I let you know that was a tiger, you would not have dared to throw the boiled water kettle on its head!

All people on the boat burst into a long peal of amused laughter.

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45.

PREDESTINED MARRIAGE IN DREAM

EXPLANATION

Sơn La Cave = located in the northwest of Ha Noi, in the east of Dien Bien Phu
Chu Sinh = a student whose last name is Chu
Hoa Thành = Flower City
Hoàng Kim = Imperial Gold
Hương Cống = Bachelor of Art
Tuyên Quang = located in the northwest of Ha Noi
Điệp = according to the Chinese-Vietnamese language, it means “butterfly.”

In the old days, at Sơn La Cave belonged to Hưng Hóa, there was a young man named Chu Sinh. His parents died early before he grew up; and his paternal uncle brought Chu Sinh to his home, fed and helped him to go to school. But, while the uncle loved him so much, the aunt-in-laws detested him as much. At the beginning, she was bothered because in her opinion Chu Sinh lived as a parasite on their expenses. Gradually the aunt-in-laws did not avoid to mention any more; each time if there was something unpleasant to her, she reproached him terribly. However, Chu Sinh kept quiet.

One day, the uncle went out. At home, being scolded by the aunt-in-law, Chu Sinh argued with her some sentences. Hearing that, the aunt-in-law could not stop her rage:

- As it is, you go away as fast as you can,

don't come back here to eat anymore…

Hearing her insulting words, all of a sudden Chu Sinh was angry all over his body. Immediately he prepared to put all of his clothes, books, and notebooks in his bags; then, he left the house in a hurry, swearing that he would not come back to meet her any more. He came back to his parents' house which was really broken and abandoned for a long time; then, he spread the torn mat on the bed and slept right away.

His uncle came back and knew everything; then he came to his home, encouraged him to return. Chu Sinh was already hungry for two days, but he firmly determined not to accept. Reluctantly the uncle brought money and rice to give to Chu Sinh and the uncle did his best to persuade him. The nephew promise three days. But three days had passed and the uncle did not see his nephew; again the uncle brought money and rice to provide for his nephew. Again the nephew promised three more days, but he did not keep his promise. At last the uncle came to Chu Sinh's house and said:

- You did not listen to me so I abandon

you; I have no time to convince you forever.

After his words, since then the uncle let Chu Sinh alone and did not think of him anymore.

After the rice and money were gone, Chu Sinh lay down for two days without eating. Even though he was hungry, he did not want to encounter his cruel aunt-in-laws. On that day, after reciting some poems, he fell into sleep naturally. Being in his dream, suddenly he saw an officer in splendid mandarin clothes, followed by some imperial guards, coming to his house. At that time he was reading a book. He thought they came to the wrong house, but after their announcement regarding name and age, he realized that they came to look for him. The officer opened a golden box, taking out a decree and reading for him to listen. From the beginning he thought the present emperor summoned him, but after his listening Chu Sinh was surprised because he had never heard before these very strange words "the Empress of Hoa Thành State" and also the officer's voice did not sound as that of someone living in the capital.

Chu Sinh felt safe when he realized that the strange visitor came with his willingness to escort Chu Sinh to their capital to be the imperial son-in-laws. Chu Sinh thought: "Just take a chance of good or bad luck and see what will happen." So he followed them.

The road was very dark. Only a moment they came to a place with beautiful houses and crowded people going back and forth as in a capital. Passing some big gates having soldiers guarding strictly, in front of him Chu Sinh saw a magnificent palace with its panel written "Hoàng Kim Palace." The officer asked him to wait in the imperial yard, then he enter a place covered by jade curtains.

A moment later he gingerly walked out and asked Chu Sinh to come inside for a ceremonial greeting. Chu Sinh just had enough to bow down two times, there was an order from the far inside to exempt him from doing it and asked to lead him going up to the platform near the throne. Chu Sinh saw that she was a old lady about sixty years of age, having kind-hearted features, looking at him with sentimental eyes. Even though Chu Sinh was hungry, he still tried his best to keep his courtesy. They invited him to sit on a golden chair on the left of the Empress. After some tea, the banquet was begun to

serve; so many delicious dishes were displayed full of mats. A moment later, from the back of the palace advanced a palanquin on which a teenager stepped down to greet Chu Sinh. The Empress said in an intimate voice:

- My dear son, come on to welcome and entertain him. New groom is always shy.

So both of them drank and drank. Chu Sinh felt very happy and having bon appetite which he had never have in his life. In the middle of the banquet, the Empress told him that the late Emperor, her husband, and his father already promised to marry their offsprings each other; and "now I invite you to come here mainly to exercise that promise." Even though Chu Sinh did not know when both sides knew each other and he did not see how Princess Mộng Trang's features looked like, he still nodded respectfully. After their meals, the Empress turned her head to him and said:

- You go home and wait for three days I will send someone to welcome you back.

Immediately he politely said good-bye to the Empress and others; then, there were flags, drums, and musical instruments sent him off to the outside of the imperial palace.

A cold wind flew on Chu Sinh's face, he startled, woke up, and saw himself still lying on his torn, old mat, but his mouth smelt liquor and his stomach was also full. Thinking over and over, he did not understand what happened.

Three days later, he also dreamed like before. At this time, reaching Hoàng Kim Palace, he saw a very brilliant scene with hanged lamps and displayed flowers. Chu Sinh was led to a room to take off his old clothes and put on his newly sewn clothes. For a while, there were ten imperial maids led the princess to meet the new broom. That was the moment he had only waited in suspense. And he was extremely happy when he sneakily looked and realized that rarely someone's features could pass those of his wife. Both entered the main hall to hold their nuptial ceremony then they poured liquor each other and drank in imperial music and everyone's joyful congratulations.

After that, followed the Empress' order, both led each other to nuptial chamber. In that night Chu Sinh was boundlessly happy and even though he slightly saw some strange stripes on her belly and back but he did not pay attention.

The next morning, after breakfast the couple came to greet the Empress. She said to him:

- This is the Hoa Thành State. Many years ago the late Emperor passed away, leaving to me a country with crowded population and a lot of works. The Crown Prince was too young while I was old, not being able to take care everything. Fortunately the Princess helped me since. Married woman must go with her husband, but if the Princess goes, no one would help me. So, my dear Prince Consort, you should understand my situation, leave your wife here, then every three days I will command Ambassador Xuyên Hoa coming to your home and welcoming you being back here.

Chu Sinh could do nothing but nodded and said "Yes."

After some conversation, Chu Sinh prepared to leave. The princess who sent her husband off to the outside of the imperial palace was reluctant to part with her husband and sadness expressed on her face. The crown prince kidded:

- You are just a newly wedded couple as of yesterday, how do you love and miss each other so much today?

Everyone laughed loudly, making him shy terribly.

And then Chu Sinh woke up again after one-day and night sleep. The odor of liquor and the princess' perfume was still smelled somehow. At this time he did not consider it a strange thing anymore. He opened a book. He did not feel hungry at all.

Since then, every three days Chu Sinh dreamed again and came to Hoa Thành State in order to meet the princess and to have full eating and drinking parties. When his dream finished, again he lived alone and poorly in his torn house. Even though he did

not eat and drink anything besides in his dream, his features were ruddy, fresh, and bright.

His life continued as usual for more than one year and a half. The people in his neighborhood considered that he had a without-food method; they asked him and he smiled but did not answer. At that time Chu Sinh's wife gave birth to a boy. The Empress commanded the wives' officers coming to let the baby sucking their milk. The baby grew fast. On his birthday, Chu Sinh came earlier than other times. At his arrival, in the palace he saw some many courtiers, high- and low-ranking officials, and very old men wearing brilliant clothes and being busy to greet everyone. They brought money, gifts to congratulate his son very much. To appreciate their willingness, the Empress ordered to have a banquet to treat them. In person Chu Sinh had to pour liquors and invited everyone strenuously.

One day, as usual he came to greet his mother-in-law. He was surprised to see her face expressing unusual worry and panic. He asked her, the Empress wiped her tears and responded:

- For a long time I have had the intention to hide something from you. But now is the time I can't hide it anymore. In the past two months, everyday I received urgent news from the frontier. Cruel enemies invaded our country; soldiers struggled against them and died innumerably. Today maybe they already approach our capital. Therefore, I plan to move our capital to another place.

Chu Sinh was going to ask more about fighting situation, but the Minister of the Army came to report:

- Your Majesty! Day by day the enemies were more strong and crowded. Based on my calculation, our soldiers and people already sacrificed one-thirds. If your Majesty try to remain here, we will not have enough people to form a country. So, your Majesty please move our capital within tonight in a hurry!

Listening to the report, in a rush the Empress commanded to write and send urgent decree to all places, ordering to depart exactly at 10 p.m. Then she turned to Chu Sinh and said:

- There are so many things to do for our country, I can't let you go with us, and I can't advise you a lot. I only remind you that I already commanded Ambassador Xuyên Hoa bringing the Princess' money to you for your expenses. My dear Prince Consort! You should try to study and pass the court examination; there will be our reunited day. In addition, it's inconvenient for the Princess and my little grandson going with you. Let's separate temporarily for while, about twenty six more months, father and son will be happily united. That's that, come to meet your wife for a while before our departure!

Chu Sinh entered the Princess' chamber with tears in his eyes. At that time the princess was preparing her luggage; she said to her husband:

- In life separation is common as long as you try hard to be patient then we will meet again in good time. I'm afraid that you are lonely; therefore, I assigned my chambermaid named Đồng Nhân to be your companion until our reunion. Also I give you my pearl made of sweet essence from precious flowers; wearing it, you will be cool in hot season, warm in cold weather.
You should always wear it, considering I'm with you all the time.

In a hurry Chu Sinh said to his wife:

- Can you go with me? If not, please let me go with you.

The princess responded:

- No way. At the present time you still have your life and work. For my part, I have to help my mother protecting our country and people's lives. Both sides haven't fulfilled responsibilities and duties; therefore, we can't go together. Well, don't be sad; our happy days will be very long later.

After that, the princess left the chamber.

Chu Sinh pulled her back and asked:

- In the future where and when we will meet again? Can you tell me?

The princess took the pearl, put it in his pocket and said:

- Everything is told in it.

When Chu Sinh was awake, the worry, separated scenes just being happened disappeared totally. He lid his lamp and saw a bag of ten ounces of gold in the middle of his bed. He searched his pocket; in fact, there was an pearl in white color like ivory, having blue veins, long like a short pen on which there were some engraved sentences of poem:

Whenever there are ten thousand well-
trained soldiers,
And military music, fighting drum played
at the frontier,
On the west there is Hồ Thủy Lake in front
of your ship
At Hoa Cương, go directly and immediately
to the East.
Wait until there is a report of victory,
There will be some words of reunion later.
Please don't be missed then sad;
Only fifteen years we will be reunited.

He read and read again two, three times but he did not understand. Then he tried hard to think over and over in order to understand regarding their past relationship, but he could not find the clue. His mind was intricately tangled; so he thought: "Then there will be the answer. I shouldn't think to be tired."

On that day it was still dawn, there was a cry. In haste he ran to the neighbor's house to ask about it. They told him that his aunt-in-laws caught cold and died and they were going to bury her. Hearing that, Chu Sinh decided to return to his uncle's house. Seeing the nephew coming back with books and clothes, the uncle could not hold his anger and said:

- More than two years, you did not think of me. Why don't you go forever? Why do you come back? For what?

He smartly found a way to lie:

- Yesterday I dreamed my father coming back and he said that you are very poor and there is going to have some bad news in your family; so, there have been some gold hidden under the floor of my house; I dug it up and planned to bring it here to help you. Therefore, now I heard the funeral, so I come back here.

After speaking he displayed all ten ounces of gold on the table. Seeing that, the uncle changed his anger to joy. Since then, Chu Sinh peacefully stayed at his uncle's house to study. He did not dream anymore as before and he always kept his mouth shut about those strange things happened to him.

On the examination of that year, he passed and got the academic title "Hương Cống."

One day, after a business strip his uncle brought back a girl eighteen years of age, lost her way. Hearing the girl saying that her name was Đồng Nhân, Chu Sinh suddenly recollected his wife's words before their separation, so he agreed with his uncle's recommendation on a wedding ceremony with Đồng Nhân.

More than one year later, Đồng Nhân gave birth to a boy for Chu Sinh. According to Chu Sinh the more their boy grew up, the more he resembled the one whom the princess gave birth to for Chu Sinh. He counted on his fingers and realized that it was twenty-six months as the Empress' words.

Many years went by. In the course of time and day by day Chu Sinh's life was more famous and prosperous. He was a high-ranking courtier respected by everyone.

One year, there were rebels in Tuyên Quang Province. The King appointed him to be general leading twenty thousand soldiers to suppress the rebels. When his troops came close to the rebels' headquarters, there was a torrential stream obstructing the way. He asked the people living near by and they told him that was Hồ Thủy Ravine located in front of Hoa Điệp Cương, and if he went around on the West or East for one day, he would have reached the rebels's camp. Hearing that they mentioned these proper names, he suddenly remembered engraved sentences on the pearl. Then he took it out and read again the poem which was exactly secret words tipping him how to destroy rebels. So he followed the tip by attacking rebels on both sides; evidently rebels
greatly lost their battle, killed and arrested mostly.

After his victory, on the boat Chu Sinh went around Hoa Cương. The boat man told him that about 15 years ago there were a group of butterflies, about some thousand ones, from nowhere coming here, covering the whole area; that was why people called Hoa Điệp Cương instead of Hoa Cương. At that time Chu Sinh understood the matter; he was surprised and happy at the same time and he ordered to stop the boat for a rest. That night he dreamed Ambassador Xuyên Hoa coming to welcome him. He went with the ambassador right away.

At his arrival he recognized that the present scenery was more beautiful than before: splendid castles and palaces, crowded inhabitants. Just reaching the gate of the imperial palace, he was heartily welcome by the Empress.

- My dear Prince Consort! It was a real
hardship for you going to suppress rebels. Oh!
Oh! Now your moustaches and beard are long! You are not handsome and young like before. The time went by so fast!

Then he met the princess in the West chamber; both talked and made love each other ardently and sentimentally.

In the afternoon of the next day Chu Sinh still did not want to leave. The Empress came and urged him to fulfill his country duties then said:

- I'm very old now! I have decided in ten more days I will divide our state into two parts, one for the Crown Prince, one for the Princess. So, my dear Prince Consort, remember to come back here to take care of the new state. At present people live in peace but you should prevent enemies often invading and harassing in this Hoa Thành State.

Chu Sinh had enough time to say only the word "yes" in his dream and someone woke him up. His close officers surrounded him and let him know that he already slept one day night and one day. In order to calm them down, in a hurry he untruthfully said:

- I was very tired and slept to make up for my military hardship; and I did not expect to bother you.

Next, he planned to take preventive measures for the Hoa Thành State. He thought: "Only birds are the enemies of butterflies." Therefore, then he bought thirty acres of rice field around Hoa Cương area and allowed people to cultivate them without paying anything, but they had a duty to chase and catch birds for him only.

Then he led his troops back. The King praised his distinguished services and awarded him greatly. But the King was very surprised because after that Chu Sinh filed an application to resign. The King could not force Chu Sinh; so the King let Chu Sinh go as he wished.

Being permitted to resign, one day he said good-bye to his uncle and led his wife and son to visit the Hoa Điệp Cương area. When they almost reached there, all three of them transformed into three white butterflies flying up to the sky. Passing Hồ Thủy they were welcome by Ambassador Xuyên Hoa and a company of butterfly soldiers.

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46.

THE INVISIBLE COAT

EXPLANATION

Cao Bằng= located in the north and northeast of Ha Noi
adjacent to China
Thái Nguyên = located in the north of Hà Noi
Hộ Quốc Tướng Quân = a general defending his country
Đại Việt = the official name of Vietnam from 1054-1400 and
1428-1804 (totally 723 years).

Since time immemorial in Cao Bằng region there was a mobile young man named Triều, working as a fisherman. His property was almost nothing except his professional tools. But he had a charitable character. Every time he caught many fish, he often exchanged them for rice and gave it to the poor he met. As a result, all the poors in the region liked him very much.

After living in Cao Bằng for while, Triều moved to fish in Thái Nguyên region. Here, he still helped everyone with all of his effort. One day, he could not catch any fish. But on his way back home, suddenly he saw a naked old beggar lying down at the root of a big tree. Feeling very pity for him, he took off his shirt to cover the old man.

For a short period of time later, one day while he threw his fishing net in the middle of a river, unexpectedly he heard the sound of a musical instrument, echoing from a high mountain. On the next day, he heard it again as yesterday. Then, on the day after

next, the familiar sound of a musical instrument flew to his ears. Being very surprised and curious, he packed up his tools then looked for a way to climb up the mountain, determining to find the player of that musical instrument. Following the sound of the instrument, he advanced his steps through grasses and bushes.

Finally, coming to a large space, he saw an old man sitting on a slab of stone. The old man was completely infatuated with his instrument, not knowing someone approaching. Triều recognized the old man's features resembled very much those of the one lying at the root of a tree before. Waiting until the musical piece totally ended, Triều came to the front of the old man and asked:

- Dear sir, who are you sitting and playing a musical instrument here?

The old man raised his eyes and looked at him fondly; then the old man pointed to a slab of stone in front of him and said:

- I have sat here in waiting for you! Are you tired after climbing the mountain? You should sit there to rest for while…

Just taking a cup of water from the old man's hand, he heard the old man saying:

- Do you remember me?

Triều answered right away:

- Yes, I do! Are you the person who lay at the root of a big tree at the beginning of a village some time ago?

The old man responded:

- Right! On that day you accepted to be half naked in order to yield your shirt to me. There was rarely this kind of heart! Today I want to compensate you another coat.

After his words, the old man took off his long coat, covered Triều's body and disappeared.

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After Triều received the coat from the Fairy, he realized that was not a regular coat, but a precious possession which could made someone invisible. Each time putting the coat on, no one could see him in front. Triều was so happy; since then he traveled all over the place. He often wore the coat then came to rich men's houses, quietly entered their rooms and bedrooms, and took money and rice to give to poor people. He discreetly punished bad, cruel persons. There were really miserable people who were exhaustedly lying on the road and while they were complaining, suddenly some coins from nowhere fell in front of their eyes. There were some officers who were binding someone to beat, but themselves they were painfully whipped on their backs; however, in turning their heads they saw nobody at all. So many similar things happened making the rumor spreading in the whole region. Some people were worried while other ones were happy, but everyone believed God and Buddha having their eyes.

As it is, Triều went to all over the place and helped miserable people. One day, he came to the capital. Putting his coat on, he walked and looked around to his heart's content. After entering rich men's houses, he came to the forbidden chamber where no one like him being permitted to enter since former times. Realizing so many poor people living in the capital, he slid into the king's treasure and stole money to distribute among them. Consequently, the state bank was always undergone some loss, but no one found the culprit. At the same time, all over the capital there was a rumor that a Fairy often saved the poor and punished the bad guys. The Fairy was present at everywhere but he never "appeared to be seen."

However, one day, after punishing a
bourgeois who was relying on his power to beat someone powerless, in a hurry Triều sneaked out of his mansion immediately due to his servants crowdedly coming after hearing the noise. In haste Triều was caught by a bamboo thorn at the fence making a hole on his coat. Triều was afraid that he could be caught by that; therefore, he used a

small piece of fabric to mend it. After that, everyday again he entered the king's treasure to continue his duties.

Since the day being reported that the treasure always undergone some loss, the king was very worried. The King commanded that the treasure officers had to catch the secret thief, if not they will be punished without pardon. Many times these officers tried their best to watch out for the culprit, but they were in vain. More and more the money in the treasure went down a little, but they still could not find a significant trace. At last they ordered to set a sensitive net to snatch at something they suspected.

One day, suddenly the treasure officers saw a piece of fabric moving towards the treasure then moving out. Immediately they pulled the net down at the piece of fabric and they caught Triều. The officiers taking care of the treasure were very happy and led him to the King. The King ordered
to put Triều in the jail on waiting his trial.

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At that time, there was a king of a neighbor state who wanted to invade and occupy our country for a long time. When Triều was jailed, thousands of troops and horses of that neighbor state were moving to cross the frontier. The King ordered his military forces to struggle against them, but his forces failed in every battle, not being able to stop the enemies advancing like a storm.

More and more the situation became very critical. Everyday urgent news from the frontier going through so many horse stations were reported to the King, making everyone in the capital to be panic-stricken. Hearing the news, Triều asked the warden to inform the King permitting Triều to pacify the enemies for the sake of the country. The King was so happy, ordered to release him from chains, summoned him to come, and asked:

- How many soldiers and horses do you

need?

He responded:

- Your Highness! Only me, I can chase brutal enemies out of our country. I just beg from you for a sword.

The King released his sword, gave it to him, and appointed Hộ Quốc Tướng Quân. The King also ordered all military forces following his command.

Before his departure, the miserable people, who were helped by Triều long since and now heard that Triều was forgiven and appointed general to fight against the enemies, all came to thank him and volunteered to go along. Triều arranged them becoming a military unit; then everyone departed.

When arriving the region being occupied by the enemies, at night Triều wore his invisible coat and hid the sword for not being seen; then by himself Triều sneakily entered the tent of the general commanding vanguard troops and cut off that general's head. Our adversaries who lost their general as snakea without heads ran helter-skelter. The people who followed Triều just waited and caught them on roads and in bushes.

Coming to other enemies' camps, Triều did the same thing. Not very long later, all well-trained vanguards were destroyed or caught. Soldiers of other enemy troops were panicked because they believed that in Đại Việt there was a powerful deity helping the Vietnamese, therefore, all their talented generals were killed. Realizing that his soldiers were dispirited, the neighbor king ordered to withdraw his troops. Since then the frontier was in peace. All over the place, everybody praised Triều's victorious service.

After Triều led his triumphal army back, the King commended Triều very much. He appointed Triều first-ranking courtier, gave Triều two counties to collect taxes, and also married his daughter to Triều. Since then people used to called him Quan Triều. At the present time in Cao Bằng and Thái Nguyên still have the temples worshipping Quan Triều.

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47.

THẠCH SANH & LÝ THƠNG

EXPLANATION

Cây đa: a kind of secular tree planted it at the entrance/exit of a village or at the ouside of a temple/pagoda in the past centuries.
Ngọc Hoàng = God's name according to the Vietnamese language
King Thủy Tề: the king in the ocean

Once upon a time in Cao Bình County there was woodcutter couple named Thạch Nghĩa whose age was old but had no child. Day and night the couple was worried; so they tried to do more charitable works, such as digging a ditch, patching a road, dredging a well, boiling water for passers-by to drink, etc., in order to be blessed by God who would have given them a child.

Evidently, later on Mrs. Thạch Nghĩa was pregnant, but for three years she did not gave birth to a child. However, after Mr. Thạch Nghĩa died, she gave birth to a very cute boy named Thạch Sanh. Some years later, Mrs. Thạch Nghĩa also died; since then Thạch Sanh lived alone in a tent under a "cây đa," having only a thick shorts and an axe to cut

woods. When he was thirteen years of age, Ngọc Hoàng ordered a fairy coming down to teach Thạch Sanh all kinds of martial arts and supernatutal powers.

One day, there was a liquor salesman named Lý Thông passing by and taking a rest at Thạch Sanh's place. Realizing that Thạch Sanh who was strong also being orphaned could be taken advantage of him, Lý Thông proposed to be adopted brothers; then he led Thạch Sanh to his house.

At that time there was a devilish python used to catch and eat people; the officers and soldiers of the king's court surrounded it and fought against it several times but they could not kill it because it had many supernatural powers. Reluctantly the King ordered to build a temple worshipping the python and every year the people in the village had to offer it a live person. That year was Lý Thông's turn for the python. Hearing the bad news, Lý Thông and his mother were panicked and they planned a plot to let Thạch Sanh go and die for him. In that late afternoon Thạch Sanh came back from his wood cutting work; Lý Thông served Thạch Sanh with food and liquor then said:

- Today there is an important thing that the king's court assigned me to watch the temple; but I just began to cook liquor and I'm afraid it will be failed if I go; so I would expect you taking pains to replace me for one night.

Thạch Sanh did not suspect anything and agreed to go.

At midnight, in the middle of the forest, suddenly the wind blew hard, the branches were shaken, and it was very cold; the devilish python appeared, opened its mouth, showed its tusks, breathed out with fire, and advanced in order to eat Thạch Sanh. Being calm, Thạch Sanh applied his supernatural power to fight against the devilish python. A long time later, the devilish python was killed, transforming into a giant python. Thạch Sanh cut off its head and brought it home.

Getting back home at midnight, Thạch Sanh knocked and called the door. In the house, Lý Thông and his mother thought that was Thạch Sanh's soul coming back to revenge himself on them, so they kept bowing their heads and praying. At that time Thạch Sanh just knew their cruel hearts deliberately pushing him to the death; however,

with kind personality he was not angry and happily told them how he killed the devilish python. After hearing the story, a wicked plot flashed in Lý Thông's mind. He threatened Thạch Sanh that: the python had been raised by the King, and it was killed by Thạch Sanh; as a result, he would be condemned to capital punishment. Next, Lý Thông advised Thạch Sanh to run away. Thạch Sanh listened to it. Then, days and nights Lý Thông went to the capital and reported to the King that he killed the devilish python; then he was appointed admiral.

At that time the King's princess would have liked to select a prince consort. The bulletins were announced and hung everywhere and messages were sent to other countries; but she did not find someone agreeable to her heart and mind. One day, the princess promenaded in the King's garden; all of a sudden an evil eagle swooped on the princess, took her, and flew away. By accident the eagle flew above "cây đa" where Thạch Sanh was sitting at its root. Seeing that, Thạch Sanh drew his bow and shot an arrow reaching the eagle's wing. However, the eagle took the arrow out then continued to fly away. Thạch Sanh followed the blood trace and saw the eagle entering a solid cave. He marked the entrance of the cave and came back home.

The King was very sad when he received the bad news that his princess was taken by the eagle; he ordered Lý Thông going to find her and he promised to marry his princess to Lý Thông and to transfer his crown to Lý Thông. At the same time Lý Thông was happy and worried; so he had a plot that to organize a musical festival for ten days in his village and let people come to enjoy freely in order to find some news regarding Thạch Sanh.

The news that Lý Thông organizing a festival was spread to Thạch Sanh's ears; he came to Lý Thông's village. Meeting Thạch Sanh, Lý Thông showed his worry about not to find the princess. But, again Thạch Sanh was sincere to tell him about his arrow catching the eagle's wing. Lý Thông was so happy; immediately he asked Thạch Sanh to

lead the way and he commanded his soldiers to the eagle's den. Thạch Sanh voluntarily came down the cave to find the princess for his friend.

As a matter of fact, Thạch Sanh met the princess in there; Thạch Sanh gave an anesthetic to the princess and asked her to drug the eagle. Then Thạch Sanh bound the princess with a cord, made a signal so that Lý Thông, being outside of the cave, pulled her up. Then, Thạch Sanh prepared to go up as they planned, but Lý Thông ordered to seal the entrance of the cave.

After that the eagle woke up. Realizing that the princess disappeared, it roared while getting upset; the stone wall was trembled. But Thạch Sanh used his supernatural powers to fight against the eagle; finally, it was killed. On the way looking for a passage to go out of the cave, he saw an iron cage holding a young man. That was the crown prince of King Thủy Tề who was jailed for almost a year. Thạch Sanh used his gold bow, shot an arrow to destroy the lock of the cage, and released the prince. The crown prince invited Thạch Sanh to go to the ocean palace to visit and, but receive rewards from his king father. King Thủy Tề was very happy and gave him so many jewels, but he did not accept except a little musical instrument. After that Thạch Sanh said good-bye to the King and the crown prince, came up to his world, and returned to his old place at the root of "cây đa."

At that time the souls of the devilish python and the evil eagle were unhappy and hungry; they loitered in bad shapes and accidentally they met each other; then they planned a plot to revenge Thạch Sanh. They sneakily entered into the king's treasure, stole gems and jewels, then brought them to Thạch Sanh's place at the root of "cây đa". Consequently, Thạch Sanh was arrested and put in prison.

As for the princess, since she had been rescued out of the cave, she waited for Thạch Sanh going up like her. But, when the princess saw Lý Thông sealed the entrance

of the cave, she choked with indignation and became a mute person. When she came back to the royal palace, whoever asked her something she kept silent. Being very sad, the King commanded Lý Thông establishing a worshipping platform; but it was done for a month and the princess still could not speak.

After that, in the morning the King assigned Lý Thông to take care of Thạch Sanh's matter; Lý Thông planned to kill Thạch Sanh in that night to prevent disastrous consequences. In the late afternoon, sitting in the jail and being bored, Thạch Sanh played his musical instrument. Unexpectedly, it was a deity instrument. As long as he played, it told the whole story; its revealed Lý Thông's crimes and complained about the princess' indifference. It cried, lamented, and echoed from this palace to the other one. Sitting on the balcony and hearing the sound of the instrument, the princess smiled and spoke suddenly. She request the King for calling the instrument's player. The King summoned Thạch Sanh to the princess' palace. At that time, Thạch Sanh told his whole story to the King and the princess, from being an orphan, learning supernatural powers, making friends with Lý Thông to cutting the devilish pythong's head, shooting the evil eagle, saving the princess' life, being trapped by Lý Thông, rescueing the crown prince of King Thủy Tề, and being revenged by the devils' souls. The King ordered to throw Lý Thông and his mother in jail and assigned Thạch Sanh having total powers to decide what to do with them. Having pity on them, Thạch Sanh let them go home; but on the way both mother and son encountered a big storm and both were burned by lightning.

After that, the King permitted Thạch Sanh to marry the princess. The news spread everywhere. Being rejected by the princess before and having bad feeling regarding the marriage between the princess and a poor guy as Thạch Sanh, immediately all crown princes moved his troops to punish our country. The King ordered Thạch Sanh to pacify the enemies. When both sides prepared to fight each other, again Thạch Sanh played his

deity musical instrument. The sound of the instrument which was up and down, extraordinarily harmonious made the enemies felt emotional: Someone fretted intensively with an obsessive longing for his children and wife; the other one missed his homeland, etc.; no one thought of fighting anymore. Realizing that, all eighteen crown princes were terrified and requested Thạch Sanh for their military withdrawals. Thạch Sanh treated them a meal. They ate and ate but they could not empty their bowls. Therefore, they respected Thạch Sanh for his supernatural powers, bowed down to him, then returned to their countries.

A short time later, the King organized a ceremony to abdicate in favor of Thạch Sanh. After being a king, Thạch Sanh's first actions were decreasing taxes, releasing many prisoniers, and advising more people to work in agriculture. Since then, people lived in peace, happiness, and prosperity.

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48.

THE DEITY OF MT. TẢN VI ÊN

EXPLANATION

Mt. Tản Viên = 1281m (height), belonged to Ba Vì
Mountains located in the southwest of Ha Noi (about

60km from Ha Noi)
Thái Bạch Tinh Quân = the title of a deity named Thái Bạch
Tiểu Long Hầu = the title of a young dragon prince in the South Sea
Long Vương = the king of dragon
Thần Phù Seaway = located in the north of Vietnam; formerly belonged to Ninh Bình Province; now, Thanh Hóa Province
Sơn Tinh = the name of a deity in the mountains

In the old times, there was a woodcutter who went to the forest every dawn to collect woods for his living. Before that he used to chop some dried plants until his shoulder pole load was full; but at this time he planned to cut more a tree to hold his cottage so he had to go farther in the forest. On his way, he heard a baby cry. He stopped to hear where the cry came from; then he saw in front of in front of his eyes, under a bushy branch a big wild goat scratched about in the heap of hay and the sound of the baby cry came from that.

The woodcutter walked gingerly and hid behind the roots of a giant tree to watch what the goat was going to do. Very softly the animal scratched the heap and a freshly red chubby baby was slowly displayed; then the goat lay down to suckle the baby. He suckled its milk as fast as he could; some moment later the goat stood up, licked the baby's shaggy head of hair, and ran away. While he goat was just gone, a flock of birds came down; they covered the baby with hay and flew away in the twinkling of an eye.

The woodcutter mumbled to himself: "The fate of this baby is very strange." He came to scratch the heap of hay and saw that was a boy. He carried the baby to his home and raised him. The baby grew up very fast. The woodcutter took care of the baby like his real son who had a very strange destiny; therefore, the woodcutter named the baby Kỳ. Growing up, Kỳ was very strong. Everyday he carried his axe and followed his adopted father to the forest to cut woods.

One day, Kỳ cut very big tree whose circumference measured about 4 yards; he worked from dawn to dusk but he did not finish it; so he had to go back home. The next day, coming back to the tree, he planned to continue his work, but he was very surprised: The bark and sapwood of the tree healed themselves as he did not cut anything since yesterday. Seeing that, however, Kỳ was not discouraged; again he hit the axe against where he did yesterday. Even though he had done his best, until dusk he still could not complete his work. In the next morning Kỳ carried his axe and planned to continue what he did yesterday; but he saw that the tree healed itself as before. Being not discouraged, Kỳ cut the tree again; however, until nighfall he still did not finish it. At this time Kỳ did not come back home. He climbed on a close tree in order to watch in the night how the tree healed itself.

At midnight, the sky was starry; suddenly an old man walked on a stick to the tree being cut. He pointed his stick at the tree and in a wink of the eye its cuts healed immediately as before. In a rush Kỳ slid down from his tree, ran towards the old man, and asked:

- I have strenuously worked and I was

going to cut down a big tree soon, why do you ruin my work like that?

The old man responded:

- I'm Thái Bạch Tinh Quân! I do not want

you cut down this secular tree. Well, I give a stick to you; you go to find and cut a small tree.

After his words the old man gave his stick to Kỳ and disappeared. One day, on his promenade at the bank of a river Kỳ saw a big snake whose head was smasked and it already died for a while.

Kỳ held his stick and pointed it at the snake's head. Unexpectedly the snake revived, waved his tail, and raised its head to look at Kỳ then crawled into the river and disappeared.

One evening while Kỳ was sitting in his cottage, a handsome young man in correct clothing came with jems and jewels to thank Kỳ. The young man introduced himself as Tiểu Long Hầu, son of Long Vương in the South Sea, who was smashed in the head at the river bank by a water buffalo herdschild and was saved by Kỳ some days ago. Kỳ was determined to refuse those gifts. The young man was in divided minds then he tried his best to invite Kỳ visiting the palace in the sea. He gave Kỳ a supernatural tube made of rhinoceros' horn to divide the water in order to go down.

Being visited by Kỳ, Long Vương was very happy; he ordered to have a sumptuous feast to treat him. At Kỳ's return, Long Vương said good-bye to him with all kinds of strange gifts in the sea, but Kỳ was still determined to refuse all. At last Long Vương took out the book from a wooden case and said to Kỳ:

- You saved my son's life; I don't know what to repay you. You have refused all of my gifts. Now I would like to give you this book. Using it, you will have whatever you wish.

Kỳ accepted the wishing book and returned to the world. Since then, he received what he had wished; he had supernatural powers and became a deity to help people. He passed Thần Phù Seaway, followed the current of a river to go upwards and kept upwards

to look for a high, scenic spot to set a place to stay. When he got to an area having a very high three-floor mountain round as a parasol, he used his supernatural power to open a path going through caverns and springs and going upwards to the top of the mountain; then again he exercised his power to build a castle to live. After his settlement, he often went down to view the landscape and practiced his power to help or save people very much. The mountain where he lived was named Mt. Tản Viên; so they called him Deity Tản Viên or Sơn Tinh.

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49.

PRINCESS LIỄU HẠNH

EXPLANATION

Hậu Lê Dynasty = lasted from 1428-1788
Nam Định Province = located in the southeast of Ha Noi and
in the southwest of Hải Phịng
Thiên Đình = the court where God presides according to
the Vietnamese/Chinese belief
Ngọc Hồng = God according to the Vietnamese/Chinese

belief
Thanh Hĩa = located in the far southwest of Ha Noi also in the southwest of Nam Định
Thượng Đẳng Phúc Thần = Superior-class Blessing Deity
Lạng Sơn Province = located in the northeast of Ha Noi, adjacent to China

In 1557 (under the Hậu Lê Dynasty), in An Thái Hamlet, Vân Cát Village, Vụ Bản County, Nam Định Province, there was a Lê family. Mrs. Lê Thái Cơng was pregnant and going to give birth soon, but she suffered from malnutrition because of her eating of vegetables and fruits only. No medicine could cure her.

One day, a Taoist hermit came to introduce himself and asked to take care of Mrs. Lê's sickness. In front of the altar, the hermit prayed some incatation sentences; then, he threw his magic hammer on the floor. All of a sudden Mr. Lê Thái Cơng fell down and was unconscious; then he saw that he was led to Thiên Đình. There Mr. Lê was in feast treated by Ngọc Hồng. Mr. Lê witnessed Princess who carelessly dropped a gem bowl was banished to the world.

When Mr. Lê woke up, he heard the news that Mrs. Lê just gave birth to a girl. Mr. Lê was happy and named his daughter Giáng Tiên.

When growing up, Giáng Tiên was more beautiful, having talents in literature, music (playing musical instrument and blowing flute), and good song composition. At 18 years of age, she married Đào Lang, an adopted son of a retired courtier in the same village.

Three years later, in March 3 (lunar calendar) unexpectedly Giáng Tiên died. People said that she was a fairy returning to the heaven. However, realizing that her banishment time was not due, Ngọc Hồng forced her to go back to the world. At this time she appeared as a female deity escorted by two fairies named Quế Nương and Thị Nương. Following Thiên Đình's order, they appeared at midday in Phố Cát area, Thanh Hĩa Province.

They resided in the middle of a wonderful landscape of Vietnam. Not very long later, the people of the whole area knew about these three fairies owing to their miraculous powers. Being grateful for them, people built a temple near a mountain to worship. This temple was named Princess Liễu Hạnh's Temple.

Princess Liễu Hạnh often appeared and blessed people. The king's court learned her reputation and canonized her Thượng Đẳng Phúc Thần

At the end of the Hậu Lê Dynasty, one night a 80-year old courtier dreamed Princess Liễu Hạnh was escorted by two thousands fairies and came to give him a decree from Ngọc Hồng. In the dream the courtier saw Princess Liễu Hạnh getting on a coach made of cloud, having so many flags and banners leading the way and he also saw many musicians followed in the procession. People guessed that the Princess completed her time-limit in the world and she came back to the heaven at that time.

In her stay in Thanh Hĩa, Princess Liễu Hạnh visited all over the places in Vietnam, especially in Lạng Sơn Province. She often visited sceneries in the capital. One time she transformed into a liquor salesgirl in Hồ Tây in order to answer to the poems of the famous literary person named Phùng Khắc Khoan and his two friends whose last names were Ngơ and Lý.

After Princess Liễu Hạnh returning to heaven, Quế Hương and Thị Nương fairies often became mediums between the Princess and the people coming to pray and beg her.

People believed Goddess Liễu at Phố Cát and Sịng Temple in Thanh Hĩa, where she came down to the world for the second time.

At the present time, in Hà Nội, there is Sùng Sơn Temple, located on Hàng Bột Street, worshipping Goddess Liễu. Every year, on the Princess' birthday, people celebrate and come there very crowded.

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50.

THE MONKEY

In the old days there was a girl being a servant to a bourgeois family. She had to work strenuously for the whole day and was treated very bad by her master. There were almost nothing for her to eat and wear, and occasionally she was also scolded and beat up. Consequently, being twenty years of age she body shriveled up and looked indescribably ugly and wretched.

One day the bourgeois family had a death anniversary; trays of food were lavishly served; family members and friend crowdedly came and ate and drank without restraint. At the same time, without rest the girl had to carry water in two buckets dangling from the ends of a shoulder pole. At the tenth times, being exhausted the girl took a rest a the edge of a pond. Unexpectedly the girl felt self-pity, held her hands on her face, and cried.

At that time the Buddha suddenly appeared in the appearance of an old man. The old man seemed to come from a far distance with tired gait and gestures and begged for water. In a hurry she carried her buckets to the well and took some water for him to drink. After that, the old man asked for food. The girl remembered that her rice portion was not consumed; so she asked the old man to sit and wait while she carried water back to the house. Returning to the well, this time she took out the rice portion from one of her buckets, gave all to the old man, and said:

- They saved all of my portion with burned rice; please have this bowl to relieve your hunger.

After eating, the old man asked her:

- Why did you weep before?

In hesitation, the girl bent her face down and did not answer.

The old man continued:

- I'm Buddha! I see you having a good heart. If whatever you wish, I would do to please you.

The girl was so happy and shared her thought with the Buddha. Realizing that the girl's wish was to be less ugly only, he asked her to come down to the well and suck any beautiful flower then she would get what she had wished. In the well the girl sucked only some white flowers. As a matter of fact, after getting out of the pond she became a white, pretty girl; also her clothes transformed into something nice.

When the girl carried her water buckets back, the whole bourgeois family was very shocked. She was beautiful to the point that they could not recognize. The girl told them the story; all of them wanted to get their luck. Immediately they all flocked to the pond in the hope to meet the Buddha in order to become young and beautiful. Seeing that the

old man still sat there, they were as happy as someone to get something precious. They showed steamed sticky rice and meat and invited him noisily:

- Sir! Please have them! Have them! Then

you do a favor to help us.

The Buddha also asked them to come down to the pond and told them as he did before with the girl. In the pond, at that time there were full of red, white flowers. Everyone thought the red color was beautiful; therefore, when they were in the pond, they looked for red flowers to suck and suck in a hurry. But, unexpectedly, when they got on the ground, they did not rejuvenate, but they grew older: their faces were wrinkled; their bodies shriveled and hair grew everywhere; and everyone got a tail at the end of one's back.

Seeing that one of the people who came to carry water was terrified: "Oh look at the monsters; they bite, oh, oh, people!" But there were some other voices: "Beat them to death! Why should we fear for them?" Right away everyone carried their poles to assault those metamorphosed persons. The whole bourgeois family members ran without rest to the forest.

Since then, the girl and poor people who served the bourgeois family enjoyed its property. At the same time, the bourgeois man and his family members reluctantly lived in the forest; everyday they had to find fruits to eat. They walked with their backs bent; their clothes were torn, making them looked quite shabby. But they missed their wealth. Therefore, sometimes at night they came back, either knocking the door or sitting in front of the house, yelling all night long; until near dawn they returned to the forest.

Seeing that the girl and everyone were scared, closing their doors very tight. They discussed how to drive them away. They applied shrimp pastes on doors; also they burned many ploughshares and placed them scattered at the gates of the houses.

Evidently, one night they came back. As usual they swung along from branches to doors and cried noisily. But at that time their hands were stick with shrimp pastes; then from their hands the pastes got on their bodies which were smelt unspeakably bad. They were frightened and led each other to the gates to sit as their habit. But, just sitting down on ploughshares they yelled terribly and ran nonstop to the forest. Since then, they never came back again.

Coming to the forest to collect wood, sometimes people saw them. Seeing people from the distance, they often swung from branch to branch and disappeared fast. People called them monkeys. At the present time, still many people consider monkeys belonged to a bourgeois race. And the monkeys whose buttocks are red because they inherit the burn scars from their ancestors.

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51.

DEITY TÀ SUED DEITY ĐỊA

EXPLANATION

Deity Tà = According to the Vietnamese superstition, in the

countryside Deity Tà helped to protect lands, fields, gardens, and animals outside of the house.

Diety Địa = According to the Vietnamese superstition, Deity Địa helped to protect whatever inside of the house

Thất Sơn = Seven Mountains located in Châu Đốc Province

Bến Sấu = Bến Nghé = Saigon

"Chim heo" = a bird whose whistle resembles the sound of a swine that cries/yells

Thuở xa xưa, khắp nơi chốn ở Lục tỉnh Nam Kỳ, chủ nhà đều thờ ơng Tà, cúng lễ đầy đủ để được ơng Tà phù hộ độ trì giữ đất đai, ruộng vườn, súc vật. Khơng một ai dám làm gì, nĩi gì xúc phạm đối với ơng Tà, vì nếu khơng sẽ bị ơng Tà quở phạt tức Long time ago, in all of the places in South Vietnam the houses' owners worshipped Deity Tà; they offered complete offerings to Diety Tà so that he helped to protect their lands, fields, gardens, and animals. Nobody dared to do anything or say a word to show irreverence to Deity Tà; if not, Deity Tà would have punished people by causing sickness, epidemic, bad havest, personal thing loss, drought, flood… At that time, people had to worship in great, costly style: besides chickens, ducks, sometimes a cow or water buffalo. Deity Tà was powerful and had a hoity-toity manner.

However, Deity Tà's inherent character was fond of traveling here and there, mountains and rivers; hardly he paid attention to the change and movement of the human life style; so one day Deity Tà suddenly realized that day by day people worshipped him less, also their offerings were gradually decreased, and his managed territories were limited. Deity Tà mounted on his horse and rode off to investigate why there was such strange thing. At that time Deity Tà was shocked to see that all over the place people worshipped Deity Địa inside their houses while they built his little shrines next to the field, at the root of the tree near the road at the river bank.

Deity thought that Deity Địa inconsiderately took over his management on his

lands, enjoyed all offerings for him; therefore, he filed an application to sue Deity Địa with the Superior Deity in a nearby communal temple.

Meeting the Superior Deity, Deity Tà said:

- I would like to present that originally this region (from the Mekong River to Thất Sơn Mountains and from Bến Sấu to Gị Cơng) was under my management; everyone worshipped me and gave offerings to me. With immense land and long day my horse ran from this direction the other one to its heart's content. Now, all of a sudden Deity Địa from nowhere came here; what he did I don't know to be worshipped by the people and he took all of my offerings. So I beg you, Superior Deity, to take care of the matter.

The Superior Deity responded:

- Well, don't talk more; I knew everything. My dear Tà, as you know, whoever has distinguished services such as improvement, nurture, etc., will be granted by God; whoever has bad actions, such as digging, erosion, etc., will be punished by God. The law of God resembles that of the Earth: Whoever works, endures hardship will be fed by God; whoever is lazy will not be given by God.

Hearing what the Superior Deity said, Deity Địa, one of his hand rubbing his belly and the other waving a fan, laughed off the tension and requested to speak:

- I have not competed Deity Tà's management of his lands. My only actions were watching closely to people's houses, having patience and enduring hardship, paying attention to everything; whenever someone lost something, I looked for and showed it; whenever an epidemic was going to spread, I ordered a "chim heo" or an owl informed it in advance; I blessed cultivators, sellers, and vendors having good harvests or businesses, etc.; therefore, they were grateful to me by worshipping me, giving me a hand of bananas, a cup of tea, not something precious!

After hearing both sides, the Superior Deity said:

- Now my judgment is as follows: I'm sure

that both of you know people say: a tiger eats what it catches and also a crocodile eats what it catches. Because before Tà always enjoyed traveling here and there, did not pay attention to what people expected, and did not fulfill his responsibilities, and now there is someone who takes care of Tà's works and he does better, therefore people are on the side of that person. Now, everything is set. Tà should continue to watch fields and gardens on the outside. And Địa keeps things and helps people getting good luck inside of their houses. That's it! Tà does not complain anymore or demand anything else.

Sadly Deity Tà left the place; Deity Địa who massaged his belly, tapped Deity Tà's shoulder, and said:

- My dear Tà, don't be sad. Địa and Tà

have the same skin and complexion; it does not a matter when we're inside of the houses or at the fields because we're on the same land; we're brothers and friends. I and Tà should be harmonious and we should unite to bless and help people to work, live, and protect their lands. We work together, I'm inside and you're outside; and I'm sure that no one dares to come here anymore. You like to go here and there, up and down so it's convenient for you to be outside. My character is minute and usually pay attention to things; therefore, I should be inside for sure. Do you think it's right?

Deity nodded his head, changed his temper from anger to joy, and walked away. Since then, there is a saying: "Deity Địa watches houses and Deity Tà watches fields."

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52.

THE DEITY DOG

Once upon a time, in a highland county there was a courtier whose last name was Lê, respected and loved by the people as their fathers because during many years the courtier governed that county, he treated people as his children and grandchildren in his family and no injustice matter was not judged by him.

That old county chief had a very smart dog which was loved by him as his child. After completing his work, every night he lay down to sleep on his ornate opium bed; the faithful animal lay down near his feet, holding its head up to look the master sentimentally with its intelligent, significant eyes as if they did not belong to a four-leg race. Once in a while the old officer stopped to caress his pet; then four eyes looked at each other as though they exchanged their sympathy which did not have to be spoken by words.

One night the old officer did not rise anymore from his ornate bed. In grieving and crying, the people in the area came to his funeral as if their father died. After the burial, everybody came back home; on the new tomb, the faithful dog still stayed, cried, and tragically moaned in series.

His oldest son's name was Tơng; owing to the training and instruction of his late father, Tơng passed the king's court examination and was appointed to replace his father's position. But, Lê Tơng's characters were different from the late county chief; in his governance, Tơng often proved harsh, greedy, and cruel. The more people had loved the late old county chief before, the more they hated his eldest son named Tơng at that time.

The only thing Tơng imitated his father was to smoke opium, smoking right away in the first evening after the late county chief's burial. People were worried about

providing enough opium for the new chief and if anyone who provided the opium in low quality will be spread-eagled and beaten immediately in front of the county office.

One night Tơng smoked more than as usual; lying in his vague dream next to a peanut oil lamp, suddenly he heard a soft noise then saw a dog jumping up on the ornate bed and lying behind the opium tray. Tơng wanted to yell in order to chase it away; but he was too intoxicated, so he just mumbled some words: "Go away! God-damned animal!"

The animal's intelligent eyes stared at him, making him being annoyed; so he could hum only: "God-damned animal!" Then he shut his mouth, being very amazed and frightened when the dog questioned him: "Why you curse me and chase me away? Have I done anything to harm you?"

After his terrified moment, Tơng kept his composure, realizing a sense of humor in hearing a spoken dog; so he said to it:

- Well, if you are a dog, how can you speak like that?

Then Tơng could not hold his choking laugh in a series.

Again the dog said:

- You are mistaken! You think I'm just a dog. In fact, I'm a deity. Deity! Deity… dog.

Tơng wanted to burst out laughing, but he was legarthically intoxicated; therefore, he just opened his eyes a little and gave a muffled laugh.

- You do not believe my words?

Tơng laughed again then said:

- I do not believe in deity and saint!
- The one day you must to believe, and that

day will not be far.

- If that day is real, it will be the day you

make me having no more my high position, wearing a loin-cloth in the forest, and being a beggar.

The dog did not answer right away; Tơng did not pay attention, continuing to burn his opium. While Tơng was smoking his opium, the dog told him about his crimes, then advised:

- You should regret and follow your father's

good deed so that his soul would not feel ashmed.

Being tired of the animal's lecture, Tơng raised his head and said:

- I'm sick of listening to your words! Go

away.

The dog's voice became serious:

- If you want like that, I don't care anymore.

I go now, but not very long later you had to meet me again. Do remember your words to me.

After its last words, the dog jumped down to the floor.

Tơng felt into sleep, flying in his bad dream; when he woke up, he had a terrible headache. Day by day the young county chief was more strict; his county servicemen were ordered to arrest people: demanding bribes from the rich and beating up the poor. The dog did not come back and Tơng also forgot about the meeting night with his old man's faithful animal.

One stormy afternoon with black clouds moving fast, a messenger with a group of soldiers came to the gate of the county office. The leader commanded to inform the

county chief. As usual, everyday County Chief Tơng forbade his servants to wake him up while he was taking a nap; therefore,
they hesitated and did not dare to wake him up. The strange guest loudly commanded one more time then the trusted serviceman tiptoed in the county chief's bedroom to inform in tremble. Being still in his sleep, County Chief Tơng noisily scolded; but when he heard about the powerful strange guest, he raised up fast, put his clothes on, and came out to crouch in front of the messenger and to welcome him. That strange guest was the king's court messenger came to inform that the King was going to come here in any day.

So, in following days the people in that county were in really bad hardship because the young county chief commanded his subordinates to force people forgetting their own businesses to prepare everything extraordinary on the way to welcome the King. Yamen's attendants and soldiers had the opportunity to bother and demand people to do so many things. County soldier's hands were numb because they beat and rush people to do official matters.

On the King's coming day, County Chief Tơng wore resplendent king court clothes and sat on a litter with a parasol for his soldiers to carry on the way to welcome the King. From the distance County Chief Tơng saw the King's litter coming, he got off his, then he fold his arms in front of his chest near the altar exhaling incenses made of aquilaria. All of a sudden, from a bush on the sidewalk a dog jumped out and sprang on County Chief Tơng to bite and tear his king court clothes. Being panic-stricken, his escort guards did not have time to do anything while the dog ran and disappeared.

County Chief Tơng did not have enough time to calm himself, but the King's litter and guards already came. Seeing the county chief almost naked with terribly torn clothes, the King got very upset and ordered to punish severely and immediately the officer who showed irreverence to the King, daring to welcome him with such disrespect.

County Chief Tơng entreated obsequiously and explained the sudden incident just happened regarding the dog; but the King did not pay attention. Besides the King already knew about the cruel governance of the corrupt county chief; so, taking advantage of that occasion, the King wanted to show his powers. The trusted courtier was ordered by the King to dismiss County Chief Tơng's title and position to become a regular person before to behead him in front of the county office regarding his disrespect towards the King.

Tơng was tightly bound and led to the front of the county office where became an execution ground. While the headsman was preparing, a very old local man asked for seeing the King, requesting that the King should think of the soul of the late gentle, virtuous county chief whose son was Tơng and pardon Tơng, the bad son, for his death sentence. The King accepted the sincere request. Tơng escaped his death, fell to his knees in thanksgiving to the King, walked away, and avoided to meet anybody on his way.

Going toward the near forest, Tơng walked and run at the same until he was in the middle of the forest and he saw no one around; then he lay down at the bottom of a tree, cried his eyes out, was contrite, pitied himself, and felt humiliated. Being bitterly disappointed and exhausted, Tơng fell into sleep. It was late afternoon when he woke up; he felt very hungry, slowly raised up, stumbled along to find a spring for his thirst and to look for some fruits for his hunger. Tơng stayed in the forest from day to day to eat savage fruits and to drink spring water; he avoided forest paths because he was afraid of meeting people who would have seen his distressed life. Being hungry and cold, encountering wild animals, and being strenuous in the forest, Tơng clenched his teeth to bear all because he did not come back to the human race due to his pride being injured.

One day, Tơng came to a light forest and saw a shabby cottage near a brook. Being exhausted and very hungry, Tơng could not maintain his pride anymore. Tơng

dragged his feet toward the cottage, seeming a heaven to him at that time. Before coming to the door of the cottage, Tơng saw the clear water of a brook and stopped there; he used his hands to hold the water to drink and to clean his face for refreshing.

Tơng was frightened when the surface of the water reflected his image: gaunt face, sunburned skin, very skinny body, torn and dirty clothes. He broke the surface of the water as if he would had liked to chase his own image away; then Tơng planned to run away, but he was too exhausted and weak; so, forgetting his shame, Tơng dragged his body to the cottage.

The door was opened. Tơng saw a young girl about fifteen years of age in brown, torn clothes, but she looked very mild and beautiful. At the beginning, the girl could stop being scared to see a stranger; but, after reviewing the haggard, weak appearance of a handsome man, she thought that he could not be a robber; so she was calm down. A sturdy man came from behind the girl and questioned him…

That was a woodcutting family, living at the edge of the forest, working hard, and being poor but enjoying their own private life. They invited him to enter their cottage; then at lunch they invited him to have it together. Never in his life Tơng had such appetite. Red rice mixed with manioc filled in bowl made of stone, salted sesame, and pickled tiny squash were usually their daily meals; however, he appreciated them double more than delicacies on china dishes and silver plates in his officialdom. The woodcutter could not hold his pleasant smile when he saw the guest did not disparage his simple meal and ate four bowls full of rice. The host poured and invited Tơng a bowl of savage liquor; he drank as if he enjoyed a fairy wine and he felt that in his recently past noble life he had never had a such excellent food and drink.

After that, Tơng politely thanked the host and said goodbye to them. The woodcutter realized that Tơng was still tired and weak; so, he asked him to stay until tomorrow.

That nigh, Tơng lay down and slept on an old sedge mat, but he felt it was the best pleasure he had ever had in his life. The hardship and lack of food for so many days caused a serious fever in Tơng. In the next morning Tơng could not raise up.

Constantly for some days, Tơng was in a coma. Owing to the woodcutter's wife went, found some herbal medicine in the forest then boiled and gave him to drink, his fever went down. When Tơng totally recovered from his sickness, the woodcutter said:

- I don't know where are you from and

where are you going to, but if you don't disparage this cottage providing a place to avoid the rain and the sun better than you wander in the outside, I would invite you to stay with us. The forest does not lack of woods as long as you take pains to work with us.

Tơng was hesitating; he raised his head up and suddenly he saw the girl's eyes, sparklingly black and clear, which attentively looked at him and anxiously waited for his answer.

- I stay.

Tơng could speak like that. Since that day I

began to share the woodcutter's family life, including hardship and joy of this poor, low-class family. Soon he learned many good things when he exchanged his labor for a living as a fact which in his stuying life he had never known.

During daytime Tơng went to the forest to cut woods; in the evening Tơng also taught the girl under a dimly-lit canari resin lamp. He did not mind any difficulty to help around and he was pleased to see the progress of his innocent female student. And the

girl could not hide her interest of everytime being next to the strange, secret young man who never told his past and whose mind wandered sometimes in a distant place.

Two peaceful passed; Tơng almost forgot his previous bourgeois person. At that time the woodcutter's daughter became a beautiful girl whose coarse brown clothes could not decrease her bright puberty. The simple-minded girl's white very pure, fervid attitude totally changed his previous personality which was cruel, selfish, and haughty. As other people he already became a regular person who worked hard everyday, but his mind was tranquil and light. Tơng began enjoyed his happiness meant love which he never knew at all in his rich county office life.

One day, Tơng was wiping his sweat on his forefront after cutting a big tree, he heard a near moan; turning his head he saw a dog looking at him lugubriously. The dog was very old, skinny, weak as if it was going to die soon. Tơng sat down, caressed it with his hands; it looked at him with thankful eyes. Already having his rice wrapped in a base of the areca leaf and dried fish in a small bag for his lunch, Tơng shared them with the dog. It ate all of its portion in a little time. Quietly Tơng at the dog; all of a sudden he remembered his image in two years ago when he was exhausted as the pitiful dog at that time.

When Tơng carried his axe to come back home, the dog trailed along behind him. At night, while everyone in the cottage quietly slept in turn, Tơng lay sleepless; suddenly he heard a light noise and guessed that was the dog coming to lie down near his feet. Tơng caressed the animal licking his hand. Then, in the dark, quiet night, suddenly Tơng heard its voice:

- Didn't you recognize me? I'm the one

who brought you here! Do you remember your words to me "having no more my high position, wearing a loin-cloth in the forest, and being a beggar?"

The dog kept quiet for a long moment then said:

- Now are you believing that there are deities?

Tơng answered in his mind:

- I believe in you and I beg my father's soul forgives my sins.

- Are you willing to listen to me?

- Speak to me, please!

……

In the next day, it was very dark in the evening but no one saw Tơng coming back. And all night Tơng still did not appear. The girl had a sleepless night, waiting and crying in silence. Very early in the next morning she and her father went to the forest and came to where Tơng usually cut woods, and they saw his gourds of wine and of water at the root of a tree. Looking up at a tree trunk whose bark was peeled a big piece, she saw and read the words which Tơng used a sharp knife to carve as followed: "Tơng must go for something; I always remember you and promise to be back."

While the girl sadly came back to her cottage, Tơng was already very far from her; Tơng followed the dog and he did not ask where it would have brought him to

Getting to a village, at a winter market day, the dog did many tricks under Tơng's direction which many curious people surrounded to see and gave them some money as an award. Rich businessmen competed each other in inviting them to their homes to enterntain then to treat them very well.

From village to village, from county to province, wherever Tơng and his dog came to, they were always applauded and given money by people. Tơng and his dog had adequate food and were in satisfaction on the way.

From the mountainous region to delta areas, they walked and kept walking. The fabric bag hung on Tơng's shoulder began to have some extra coins, and day by day it was more heavy. Tơng did not ask his dog regarding their destination. The dog also kept quiet and it looked like a regular one except its skill in tricks and its intelligence in understanding the people's words.

One late afternoon at the time water buffaloes and cows returned to their stables, Tơng and his dog arrived at the capital. Passing the capital gate, Tơng recollected the year in which his carried his camp-bed and its arched top for the competiton-examination and the day in which his name was written on the golden bulletin as a result of so many years of his studies.

In the capital, in a short time the reputation of Tơng and his dog spread every house. Besides skillful acrobatic tricks under the direction of its owner, the dog amazed the people regarding its comments which were never incorrect. Based on planned convention, the dog gave exact answers for men or women regarding their marriages, celibacies, offsprings, occupations or positions, ages, rich or poor statuses. According to the people's rumor it was a deity dog and the rumor got to the King's ears. The King also wanted to examine the dog's wonderful talent so he could judge the people's rumor fair or exaggerated.

There was the King's order to summon Tơng and his dog coming to the King's court to demonstrate. The King was surprised when Tơng, a regular person, greeted him with correct King's court ceremony. The King did not recognize Tơng who was the dismissed county chief. The dog began to jump, dance, and do tricks; the King laughed with tears when he correctly indicated the rank of each courtier by his barking series. Its last performance was poetical composition. Tơng requested for white papers putting on the floor of the King's court and a pen attached at the dog's foot. After putting the pen

brush in the ink-bottle, the dog nodded his head in thinking then wrote a ruled poem dedicating to the King. Its handwriting was very beautiful as dragon's flight and phoenix' dance and its lyric was elegant, extraordinarily ornate and flowery.

The imperial guards brought the poem to the King; he was amazed because there was no famous poete at that time being able to compose a better poem than the one of that four-leg animal. In his joyful mood, the King commanded Tơng and his dog staying forever in his interior palace and receiving salaries and benefits from him.

Tơng fervently thanked the King's grace then addressed to the King:

- Your Highness, you saw some tricks only;

my faithful animal still have many more extraordinary things.

Realizing the King more surprised and curious, Tơng presented to the King:

- If Your Highness want to witness true or

fake matter, please convene all literary, martial

courtiers at your royal court.

Being eager to see new tricks, the King approved Tơng's proposal and commanded that in the next day morning all courtiers had to be present at the royal court. In addition, Tơng requested for a private short-time meeting with the King before the beginning of extraordinary tricks show. Even though the request was considered daring, but it was accepted while the King was in a good mood.

In the next day morning, before the King came out, all courtiers assembled in the royal court. Tơng and his dog were led to have a private meeting with the King in his forbidden chamber. After the King ordered all of his left, right imperial guards to leave the chamber, Tơng respectfully said:

- Your Highness, besides the outstanding intelligence totally different from its race, my dog has a special talent that it can read the people's sneaking thoughts and secret

actions then it tells me only; and it gives wise, extraordinarily skillful ideas. If Your Highness permits, it will tell in details regarding how is the service of each high-ranking courtier to Your Highness.

The King was very surprised and asked Tơng how it could be done.

Tơng answered:

- Your Highness order a guard to announce

each courtier's name, title, and position; then Your Highness allow my dog to approach and smell each of them in order to exam; after that, allow it to see me in private so that I can hear its comments then I will reports them to Your Highness.

The King presided over the royal court and commanded to exercise Tơng's proposal. Based on the announcement of an imperial guard regarding the name, title, and position of each courtier, the dog came to that one. All high-ranking courtiers were very puzzled when they saw that in turn, one by one, the dog stopped, stood up with his back feet, stared, and smelt.

After that, Tơng and his dog were led to a private room surrounded by four tightly closed walls. The dog told Tơng everything to report; then both were led to meet the King alone.

After Tơng's report regarding the dog's comments about high-ranking courtiers, the King realized that they are correct based on facts. Then Tơng revealed to the King an important revelation:

- Your Highness, there has been a plot among courtiers to overthow Your Highness. The leader of this betraying plot was no one other than the Secretary of Justice Department who has received your grace more than anyone else.

The King kept silent because of shock and

fright. Tơng also told him the list of interior betrayers and their calculated plan, then he bowed down before the throne and addressed:

- I beg you to investigate secretly in order to

judge that the reality is true or false. If my dog knew wrong and I revealed untruthfully to bother Your Highness, I would accep the capital punishment due to lese-majesty. If that is the truth…

While the King was meditatively thinking, he raised his head and said:

- If it is true as your words, I would never

forget the meritorious services of both, you and your dog. Now I want to permit you and your faithful animal to stay in a private chamber in the forbidden palace with everything you need in waiting my careful investigation to judge your words true or false.

Based on the King's order, Tơng and his dog were led to a private chamber having servants and guards with swords watching on the outside. Three days later a trusted courtier came and invited Tơng to go. Passing golden palace lobbies, Tơng followed the courtier to enter the middle of the main court. Seeing that the King was meditatively sitting on the throne, Tơng planned to bow down, but the King stepped down from his throne, helped Tơng to

stand up, and said:

- From now on I permit you, the only

person, being exempt from kneeling before me to remember your services to help me keeping my royal life and throne intact and the country avoiding a civil war. All of your words have proven exact. Betraying courtiers were arrested and they confessed. They will be judged according to the national laws

The King still could not hide his terror after his bad courtiers' plot to kill him and he emotionally said to Tơng:

- I do not know who you are, where you came from, but from now on I like you being near me with the title as National Advisor, the first- ranking courtier that I appoint you. Besides I permit you entering the forbidden palace and meeting me any time as you wish; and you are under my command only.

The King reserved for Tơng a big palace, gave him so many jewels (gold, silver, gem) and silks; and every time the King decided something important, he always asked Tơng's advice. Even though Tơng lived in power and wealth, Tơng did not feel happy and people never saw him smiling. One day the King intimately asked him, his high-ranking courtier, the reason; at that time Tơng sincerely revealed that even though he received so many special favors from the King, he never felt the enjoyment living in the golden palace; and he requested the King for permitting him to return to his native place in order to visit his father's tomb. The King did not like to be separated from his benefactor, but he reluctantly listened to Tơng's request.

Some days later, on the way to his native village, Tơng was no more a person leading a dog doing tricks, but he who stately rode a courser given by the King was escorted by august guards in the middle of a procession with flags and canopies. Getting to the front entrance of his village where the dog bit and tore his clothes, causing so many troubles for him, while he knelt down to welcome the King, Tơng felt emotional, got down from his courser, and asked everyone to stop. Then he walked to a block of stone on the sidewalk, sat down, used his hands to hold his head, and thought.

Raising his head up, Tơng could not hold his surprise when he saw a formal procession led by the county chief to welcome him. Tơng was more surprised when that official who had replaced him three years ago read the King's proclamation appointing Tơng as the chief of that region.

People heard the news about the King's trusted national advisor coming to their county; therefore, all of them (old, young, big, small) called each other to go crowdedly; their welcome cheer resounded so much when they just saw Tơng appearing on his courser. But the suddenly noise was silent abruptly when they clearly recognized the first-ranking official was the former cruel county chief who terrified all of the people in the county. Tơng smiled, stepped down from his courser, and ordered to call elders coming and said:

- Please, rest assured and tell your sons and daughters feeling safe. The person who comes back today is not the one which the people chased before. Please know that the late County Chief Lê's son will try his best to be worth with his father's reputation. There is one thing I would like everyone know clearly that the dog, next to me, who was my late father's faithful companion helping me to become a person as now should be respected as me. I repented of of my previous mistakes; now I survive to serve and help people.

Tơng kept his promise; again the people in the region lived in peace with a governing official who was fair and benevolent. Without speaking anymore the dog was still near Tơng. However, one evening suddenly it opened its muzzle and asked Tơng:

- Did you think of marriage in order to have offsprings continuing your ancestral line?

Tơng smiled and answered:

- I did! But this time I do not listen to anyone; I decided it myself, by myself only.

The dog did not say anything more, choking in his muzzle as if it laughed.

In the next early morning, Tơng prepared to go, followed by a group of guards, people, and horses carrying many ceremonial presents. Even though Tơng did not say

the destination in advance, but the dog guessed and knew where it was and it ran ahead to lead the way. Traversing the forest and fording springs, near the late afternoon the group stopped in front of the woodcutter's cottage where Tơng had lived for two laborious years.

Seeing a group of guards and people coming to her home, the girl was scared, ran, and hid inside. At the same time the whole family members were worried and happy when they saw Tơng, in his court clothes, coming inside to greet everyone.

The wedding of Tơng and the woodcutter's daughter was organized in great style. All of the poor people in the region were invited to enjoy the feast for three constant days. The King sent a messenger bringing precious presents to congratulate the groom and his bride. After that, Tơng invited his father- and mother-in-law to live in his mansion, but they firmly decided not to leave their familiar old place in the forest and mountain.

Some months later, at the same time Tơng received the good news that his wife was pregnant and the bad news that the old dog slept and did not wake up anymore. The dog's funeral was solemnly organized in which Tơng and his wife who were in mourning following its coffin with all the people in the region.

The tomb of the constant animal was built in great style, having a stele registering distinguished services. So many generations has passed, but the story of the deity dog was still reminded on the mouths of the people living in the highlands.

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53.

THE GINSENG

Once upon a time, there was a woodcutter couple who was very poor, working strenuously all year round. They went to work from very early morning until evening but they could not have enough rice to eat. The couple had a very young son; each day they left a portion of rice just enough him to fill half of his stomach. In such lack of food they were surprised to realize day by day their son being fat, ruddy, and healthy as if he was fed with extraordinarily nutritious food. The son still could not speak; therefore, even though they wanted to ask him regarding his extraordinary health, they reluctantly left it alone. Some years went by; the boy grew up very fast and began to speak; at that time his parents asked him about the rice portion that they left everyday for him was enough or not. The boy answered that he never knew how its taste was because every time his parents just left the shack, a group of monkeys from the forest came and ate that entire rice portion.

The woodcutter couple was amazed and asked his son that for some years without food how he could have such health and strength. The son innocently told his parents that when his parents were not home, there was a boy, naked like him from the neighbor, came to play with him; and that very lovely boy transmitted his health to him. Hearing their boy saying that, his parents were more amazed and suspicious because within approximately 10-mile radius of their shack there was not anyone's one. The woodcutter thought over and guessed that the boy coming to play with his son was probably a Human Ginseng or the soul of a ginseng plant growing close by their home.

The next morning, the woodcutter went to the market and bought a roll of thread; he brought it home and instructed his son that whenever that boy came, he tied the thread on the boy's hand or leg. The son promised to do as he father said. In the next day, the woodcutter couple left the house as usual, but they did not go to the forest for woods and were on the watch nearby. Again the Human Ginseng came to the shack and played with the woodcutter's son as other days; and following his father's instruction the boy tied the thread on his friend's hand.

At noon the woodcutter couple left their hiding place, returned to their home suddenly, and they caught both boys who were playing. In a hurry the ginseng boy ran then disappeared into a plant. The woodcutter followed the thread which was tied on the little Human Ginseng's hand and he found the ginseng plant. Being greedy and stupid, in haste he dug too strong with his hands, unintentionally killed the little Human Ginseng, and he could take the root of the ginseng plant in pieces only. Therefore, at the present time, people can have the root of a ginseng plant imagined as a human body. The Human Ginseng died because of the woodcutter's awkwardness; since then the ginseng has not had the efficacy to help the human race having the immortality anymore, and drinking ginseng is a way to supply nutrition for our health only.

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54.

MEN CHÂY PRẠT

A folk tale of
the Khmer people living in South Vietnam

Note: Some details of this folk tale were not logical, but this is a told folk tale until the present time.

EXPLANATION

Cốm giẹp = a kind of young sweet rice, but it is flat and
mixed with fresh coconut meat and a little sugar.

In the old days, there was a family of a poor peasant usually renting a rich man's field in the neighborhood to cultivate. In that year, the peasant's wife was pregnant then gave birth to a chubby, intelligent boy. The peasant couple appreciated their son as gold, as gem and named him Men Chây meant "*achieving good results.*"

But not very long time later, Men Chây's father died. The life of Men Chây and his mother became harder. At 8 years of age, Men Chây often went to pick vegetables and catch shellfish or to do some other works to help his mother.

One day, by chance Men Chây passed by a rich man's house. The female owner was weaving and suddenly she dropped the shuttle on the ground. Being lazy to bend down her back to pick it up, she called Men Chây to come and help for that. Men Chây demanded to have a gift after doing it. She agreed. But she dropped the shuttle the second time; she asked Men Chây to pick it again. Men Chây demanded many gifts if he did it. She also accepted. After that Men Chây kept demanding his gift. At last, being on the tenterhooks she asked what kind of gift he wanted. Men Chây asked for "cốm giẹp."

She called and ordered her servant to pound a mortar of cốm giẹp for him. Men Chây complained about it was too little. Reluctantly she had to ask the servant

pounding one more mortar. However, again Men Chây still complained and demanded for more.

At that time the rich man came back home after going out; he asked for the circumstance from the beginning to the end. After hearing the story, he thought of a plot and told Men Chây giving him the basket of cốm giẹp. He poured all "cốm giẹp" into a large and flat basket and divided it into two parts: One had more than the other. Then, he pointed his finger to the bigger part and said to Men Chây:

- It's already very much, take it.

Men Chây thought that "even though it was a basket of "cốm giẹp," I still complained for more; now this rich man took out some of it and he said it is a lot." Men Chây was very angry, but he did not know how to argue; so he reluctantly brought his part of cốm giẹp to his home and planned to find a way to revenge him.

Men Chây was a very dutiful to his parents. When it was going time to cremate his father's corpse, seeing that his mother moaned about having no money to do it due to their poverty, Men Chây asked her mother to permit him becoming a servant of the rich man in order to have money for his father's funeral rituals and also to have the opportunity to revenge.

At the beginning the mother did not accepted because she was afraid that the rich man oppressed and beat her son. But Men Chây kept insisting and he said that he already had his intelligence and the rich man could not easily bully him; so the mother consented.

One day, the master asked Men Chây to cook rice for his other servants to eat after coming back from fields. In the Khmer language, the word "đăm bai" has two meanings: to cook rice or to bury rice. To play a dirty trick on the rich man Men Chây took the rice, not to cook but to dig a hole, to pour the rice into it, and to fill it with earth.

At noon, the servants came back and the rich man saw no cooked rice; he planned

to beat Men Chây hard. Men Chây calmly showed the rice hole and said:

- You asked me to "bury rice"; I exactly did

as your words. Why do you plan to beat me?

With his logic mind and realizing Men Chây reasonable, the master reluctantly let it pass.

However, seeing that the servants coming back from fields were hungry, Men Chây felt regret

so he got and cook the rice for them.

The rich man thought that Men Chây did not cook rice well; therefore, in the next morning he ordered Men Chây to keep fields (exactly translated based on the Khmer language!). Men Chây said "yes, yes" to his master; but at the fields, he played then found a place to sleep, and he did not care about water buffaloes and cows entering and eating rice plants and other farm products. In the late afternoon, when he came back, the master scolded and threatened to beat him. Men Chây defended himself:

- You ordered me to keep fields; I will be

guilty whenever a field is lost; now fields are still there, I have no fault.

The master had no other good reason so he reluctantly kept quiet.

In the next day, the master instructed him to watch water buffaloes (exactly translated from "mĩi kơ krơ-bây" according to the Khmer language!). After driving buffaloes to the field, Men Chây bound and kept all of them at one place and in the late afternoon he drove them back.

Realizing his buffaloes hungry, the master asked Men Chây and he answered:

- You instructed me to watch buffaloes; so I

bound and kept them for not losing them; besides you did not instruct me to let them eat.

Again the master realized Men Chây reasonable; so he reluctantly kept quiet, but he felt a deep resentment. Next day, the master ordered Men Chây to drive his buffaloes to the field for their eating. Following the master's order, Men Chây drove

the buffaloes to the fields and let them go to eat wherever they wanted. Being hungry yesterday and being free that day, the buffaloes entered rice fields to eat as much as they could. The other owners of those fields went together to the house of Men Chây's master to demand the compensation for the damage.

The master was angry, going to beat Men Chây and forcing Men Chây to pay. Men Châu answered:

- I have no fault to be beaten and to pay for the damage. You instructed me to keep buffaloes and it's OK when I did not lose them. And they ate rice, corn, bean… that is their responsibily, not me to blame.

The master thought that Men Chây did so because he did not give careful instruction; therefore, he had to pay the damage to the owner of the fields.

Next day, the master carefully instructed Men Chây that he had to let the buffaloes eat but not let them enter the other people's fields and not let them hungry, and he had to choose young, good grass for them to eat fully before driving them home. However, realizing that Men Chây often caused problems when he drove the buffaloes to the field, the master discontinued to assign Men Châu for that job.

Then, on another day the master ordered Men Chây to carry a bag of betel and areca nut and to follow him on his way attending upon the King. He forced Men Chây to run right after him; if not Men Châu would have been punished by beating.

Men Chây did not care and let the master galloped his horse in advance while he slowly followed the master, walking and admiring the landscape on the road at the same time.

Seeing that Men Chây came late, the master asked:

- Why do you walk too slowly as a turtle?
- Because I'm afraid that the betel and areca nut in the bag to fall out.
- Nest time you must run fast right after the horse; if not, don't blame me.

Men Chây answered "yes, yes," pretending to be submitted.

At the second time, the master forced Men Chây to follow. In running to keep up with the pace of the horse, he gradually threw betel, arena nut, lime, tobacco, and all of what inside the bag.

Seeing that Men Chây kept up with the horse, the master nodded his head in satisfaction. But, when getting to the destination, he asked Men Chây to give him the bag for eating some betel and areca nut and he saw the bag empty. He got upset and asked why; Men Chây explained that because he had to run fast and to keep up with the horse, all the things in the bag fell out; he wanted to stop for picking them up, but he was afraid of being late, so he kept running.

Hearing that the master could not base on anything to reproach Men Chây, and the master instructed Men Chây that next time on the road if anything belonged to us fell down he had to collect all.

At the third time, when receiving the order to go to the capital to attend upon the King, again the master forced Men Chây to go along. On the way, seeing the manure coming out from his master's horse, Men Chây collected all and put it in the bag of betel and areca nut.

Seeing that Men Chây carried a very heavy bag, the master was sneakingly happy and surely guessed that on the way Men Chây collected many things beneficial to him. In attendance on the King and courtiers and feeling his mouth sour, the master asked Men Chây giving the betel bag to him. Being absorbed in conversation, at the same time the master talked and put his hand in the bag in order to take out the betel and areca nut to invite everyone having some together; but terribly harmful when he took them out, the betel and areca nut were mixed with the horse manure. In fear of the King and courtiers and being upset at his servant, the master furiously called and asked Men Chây:

- What the hell did you do that?
- Because you instructed me that on the

way I must pick up all things belonged to us. I saw the horse manure, I thought that belonged to you; so I picked it up; if not, I was afraid of being beaten by you.

The King and courtiers could not hold their laughs and considered Men Chây reasonable. The master did not dare to touch him. Even though the master deeply resented at Men Chây, but he had no way to punish him reasonably; so he reluctantly kept quiet and planned not let Men Chây carry the bag of betel and areca nut anymore.

One day, being called to attend upon the King, the master did not permit Men Chây to follow and ordered Men Chây to stay home and watch the house. After the master and his family members left their house for half a day, Men Chây began to burn a corner of the house; then, pretending to be panic-striken Men Chây ran to the King's palace to inform his master about the situation of the house.

Being busy to attention upon the King, the master did not dare to leave and only ordered Men Chây hastening to go back and to carry things out of the house. Men Chây asked him what should be carried out. He instructed to carry all what were light and other heavy ones were carried later.

Men Chây ran back to the fire; he looked for and carried out pillows, chicken feathers, baskets, etc., and did not care about other things. In coming back home, the master saw that his house and things were all burned. At the same time he missed his wealth and was very angry at Men Chây; he asked why Men Chây did not pay attention to extinguish the fire. Men Chây answered:

- I did exactly what you instructed.

The master felt a deep resentment against Men Chây, but he realized that Men Chây was reasonable; so he has no good reason to punish Men Chây. Right away he thought of a plot to use the King killing Men Chây for his revenge.

One day, the master addressed to the King that he had a very good servant but that one had a special skill at lying which the King could use only.

In need of a good servant, the King accepted and ordered the master bringing Men Chây to the royal palace.

When Men Chây came, the King commanded:

- I heard that you're skillful at lying; so if you want to live, you must lie how I believe; then I forget your death sentence; if not, don't blame your destiny.

- Your Highness, mostly I said the truth, but to tell a lie, I must have my book. Because I have not known your idea in advance, I have to go back to go get my book; please permit me to go back, get and bring the book here; then I can lie.

The King listened and accepted. Then Men Chây said:

- Now, Your Highness, please turn your body and head to the other side; then the book will be efficient.

Because the King to test Men Chây's skill, he did as requested. But, for a while without seeing Men Chây going any place, the King turned his body and head back and asked:

- Why didn't you run back to get the book?
- Your Highness, I did lie and your Highness believed it; I requested you for keeping your promise.

The King felt ashamed because of losing his clever and resourceful mind to a young, poor boy. Also the King was afraid that Men Chây was so skillful and he might usurp his throne; therefore, the King looked for a way to get rid of Men Chây.

Thinking of his mother who was old, weak, and poor without someone to take care, Men Chây wept and moaned at the same time. His cry impressed some soldiers' hearts. To save an innocent boy avoiding an injustice death, a soldier used his knife to cut the cord binding Men Chây before throwing him into the torrent. Owing to that, Men Chây escaped from his death.

To revenge the cruel king, Men Chây did not go far, but built a shack near the King's citadel.

The King's henchmen saw that Men Chân was still alive; they reported to the King. He commanded to arrest and torture the soldier who threw Men Chây into the torrent. The soldier explained in self-defense; then he had to bring some officials to

inspect. Men Chây was arrested and tortured.

Men Chây did not revealed regarding the soldier who saved his life; Men Chây always said:

- I have lived owing to my ancestor's blessing to their young generation.

The King did not understand the meaning of Men Chây's sentence; he ordered a fortune teller to come and to inquire into the matter. Men Chây responded:

- If you want to comprehend the meaning of my speaking sentence, you must accept like me, permit me to throw you into the torrent which I was thrown the other day.

The fortune teller agreed to do as Men Chây's words, and he was drowned and carried away.

Realizing that no trace was found and he also lost a fortune teller, the King was extremely angry; immediately he though of another way to kill Men Chây.

One day the King ordered each courtier to prepare a horse and to ride it to the forest at appointment time. When the time was near, the King told a person coming and commanding Men Chây who had to ride a horse to the forest on time; if not, he would have been punished.

Men Chây did not know where he could find a horse; right away he thought of a trick: he took a horse chessman made of wood then ran to the appointment place.

Seeing that Men Chây came late and had no horse, immediately the King loudly ordered his guards preparing to bind and punish Men Chây. At that time Men Chây widely opened his hand showing the horse chessman and explained:

- Your Highness ordered me to ride a horse but did not specify what kind of horse; therefore, I had to use this horse; I did exactly what the order was; because the horse was made of wood, please Your Highness pardon my lateness.

Realizing Men Chây reasonable, reluctantly the King accepted then planned to

find another plot to harm Men Chây.

One day later the King impromptu devised a scheme which he thought coming off. The King commanded his henchmen preparing to go swimming in a lake; each man hid an egg which Men Chây did not know. Then the King ordered Men Chây to be present on time at the lake.

At the lake the King ordered that everyone dived down and on the way up each person had to give birth to an egg.

At that time Men Chây clearly realized the King's plot to kill him, but he still found a way to fight against it. When the King's henchmen dived down, emerged from the water, and each offered an egg to the King, Men Chây also dived down, but in emerging from the water Men Chây's mouth always yelled: "Cackle, cackle!"

The King asked:

- Where is your egg?

Men Chây responded:

- These men are hens; they gave birth to

eggs while I'm rooster, I could not, however, eggs are more nutritious owing to rooster.

At that time the King had no good reason to accuse Men Chây. To revenge Men Chây chose a small chicken having spurs; then he bound more a sharp iron stick and released it, mixing with the King's flock of precious chickens. When they fought each other, the King's chickens were slashed near to death. Men Chây also released a water buffalo calf , still sucking milk and being starved for some days, whose horns were sharpened. Seeing the King's female buffalo, the calf ran after the buffalo to suck milk; but the calf sucked and pushed its horns at the same time in order to have more milk; therefore, the King's female buffalo was seriously wounded. Seeing that his precious chickens and female water buffalo were wounded, the King guessed Men Chây causing it, but without proofs to accuse he reluctantly let it go. However the King summoned Men Chây to come in his palace and ordered that "from now on I forbid you

see my face."

According to the customs of a country, the King had to go and view streets and people's houses some times per year. At that time, hearing the King going to come out, Men Chây dug a hole in the wall of his house and drew eyes, eyelids, nose, moustache, etc., on his buttocks; then he filled the hole with his buttocks looking on the street. Due to strange thing, a lot of people in the area came to see. The King who saw a crowd watching something ordered his trusted official to come and see what happened. After knowing the fact, the King commanded to arrest Men Chây and questioned him. Men Chây explained:

- Because of loving and missing your

Highness, but before your Highness forbade me to see your face, so I had to do that in order to see your Highness' face for less missing.

The King was angry; even though he could not kill Men Chây right away, he ordered to banish Men Chây to a deserted island, but Men Chây was permitted to collect taxes on boats to earn an income for his living. If Men Chây could not do that, he was forbidden to return to the mainland and had to die of starvation.

One day, a foreign messenger brought to the King three melons and gave an appointment for five days to inform there were how many seeds in each and if the answer was incorrect, they would have brought troops to attack.

The King was scared. All courtiers were worried; they could not eat and sleep well. At last, the King summoned Men Chây to the court. The deadline was only three more days and the King also gave Men Chây 3-day deadline.

On the first day, Men Chây was puzzled and he knew that if he could not find the correct answer, he was certainly being killed. On the second day, becoming muddled-headed he jumped into the river in order to commit suicide; unexpectedly the torrent carried him away to where the foreign messenger's boats were anchored. Men Chây heard the messenger talking to his subordinate official that:

- Surely the King of this country had to give

up; no way he knows that the small melon has one seed, the bigger, two, and the

biggest, three. Only the deity can guess that.

Overhearing these words, Men Chây was so happy; immediately he swam quietly to the river bank and went back home.

Exactly on the deadline day the King commanded his soldiers to welcome Men Chây very formally. When he got to the palace gate, the King and his courtiers came out to welcome him warmly.

In the King's court, after sitting Men Chây slowly pointed to each melon and said that the bigger one had three seeds, the bigger, two, and the small, one only. The King's attending official took a knife and chopped all three melons and everyone witnessed exactly what Men Chây guessed. The messenger saw and frightened; he did not demand anything; he and his diplomatic corps went back to their boats, and then sailed back to their country.

Even though Men Chây saved the country and his throne, the King was not being grateful, but also the King continued to find a way to harm Men Chây because he was afraid that Men Chây would have usurped his throne. He commanded that Men Chây had to go and live in a mountainous area where its weather was very harmful; that meant going without returning. Knowing the wicked king's bad intention, after a short journey, Men Chây escaped to his native village to visit his beloved mother.

After a period living near his mother, Men Chây guessed that soon or later the King would have ordered someone to come and kill him; therefore, he found a way to escape to a foreign country. The king of this country was also very cruel. He forbade the people to look at his face when he went by; whoever did not obey the order would have been killed. With his curious personality, Men Chây tried to find a way that cruel king's face. He found his way: After knowing that according to their habit the people of this country used to eat short noodle and the noodle salespersons often sold that along the way where the kind went by sometimes, he came to make friends with those persons and showed them how to make long noodle.

One day, when knowing the King was going to pass by, all people bent their

heads down and no one dared to raise his head. Only Men Chây who was unruffledly sitting, held long noodles up, raised his face looking up to chew slowly, and glanced his eyes to see the King's face. Seeing that someone dared to look at his face, the King ordered to arrest and put Men Chây immediately in a toxic prison where prisoners could have been killed after a full day and night. Men Chây found a way to resist the toxic air: He persuaded his prison-mates to practice martial arts all day long so that they avoided the toxic air and survived. Feeling lonely while sitting around, he made a kite which was stuck with a flute and he let it fly. The more the kite flied high, the sound of the flute was clear, woeful, and deeply sad.

The King was surprised and summoned his chiromancer to come. After doing his trade practice he explained to the King that because the King put a talented person in the toxic prison the deity kite informed the bad news and sounded as it did. The King frightened and ordered to release Men Chây; then the King summoned Men Chây to come and asked his homeland. Realizing that Men Chây had the talent, the King immediately provided Men Chây with boats, many jewels, and 100 servants and guards in order to go back to his country.

Owing to jewels, sevants, and guards, Men Chây built a castle near his King's palace; then he invited his mother and relatives to come and live together. At that time Men Chây has his power, wealth, servants, and guards, the King did not dare to do something to harm him, but in the heart the King was always afraid of him to usurp the throne; therefore, the King tried to find any way to kill Men Chây by his henchmen.

One day the King pretended to make it up with Men Chây by inviting him to a feast. Knowing that the King wanted to harm him, Men Chây thought that he would have not been in peace if he refused the invitation; so he had to accept it. Before going he reminded his mother and family members that if he died after coming back from the King's palace, they did not cry and prepare his funeral, but they had to follow his instruction until they heard that the King also died; then they would have exercised his funeral.

After participating in the feast, evidently Men Chây died of poison. His family members followed his instruction; no one cried and they used something soft to hold his eyes open and let him wear eyeglasses then put him lie down on a hammock while his hands held a book. From the distance no one knew that Men Chây was already dead.

After that, the King ordered his henchmen to investigate. When the King was reported that Men Chây was still alive, he was very surprised; he thought that his poison was not efficient. He ordered to bring the poison to him to try. After just drinking the poison, he fell down and died righ away. So, the life of a cruel king ended; he also died with Men Chây by his own poison.

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55.

THE BA BỂ LAKE

EXPLANATION

Ba Bể Lake = the lake having three parts; each part is big
like a tiny sea as the local Vietnamese thought
Năm Mẫu = Five Hectares
Vơ Giạ = Without Calamity

In the old times, in Bắc Cạn region, each year the people in the Năm Mẫu Village organized a big Buddhist ceremony the so-called Vơ Giạ Ceremony. The people in all mountainous areas gathered very crowded. One day, there was an old female leper coming to the ceremony with her clothes in rags. Besides, her body exhaled a really bad, unbearable smell so that everyone moved away from her. Wherever she came to beg for food, people drove her away and vituperated against her.

However, there was someone having pity for the old female leper. That was a widow living with her son. She did not feel horrible; she called the leper to come in her hut and fed her adequately. After that, she agreed to let the beggar stay overnight at the corner of her tiny paddy barn in her hut.

At midnight, both mother and son suddenly startled because they heard a very loud noise from their tiny barn. Opening its door, they did not see the old female leper, but a big snake was curling itself, making a thundering sound. Both mother and son were frightened and came out; they were worried and could not come back to sleep.

At daybreak, they saw an old lady who walked out from the barn and said:

- Really I'm not a human being; I disguised

myself as a beggar to test the charitable hearts of the believers who came to the Năm Mẫu Village to worship Buddha. Everyone chased me away except both mother and son of this hut. These people have the Buddhas' mouths but the snakes' hearts; they will not avoid the Almighty's punishment which assigned me to execute. Because you and your son know to pity the miserable, I inform in advance that there will be a big calamity. Whenever seeing the water coming down from the high current to here, both of you, mother and son, should run fast to the top of the mountain to avoid it.

After that, the old lady disappeared. On the next day, while people were pushing each other in order to participate in the Buddhist ceremony in the middle of the village,

suddenly torrents came from all directions, flooding the valley. People climbed up to roofs and trees. But the water kept moving up, covering all roofs and high trees. All people were drowned except both mother and son who already ran in a hurry and reached to the top of a mountain.

At the mountain, they built a shack to live. Later on, that area became a crowded village whose name is Năm Mẫu Village at the present time. The whole valley which was flooded became three large lakes immense as three seas; therefore, people named it the Ba Bể Lake. Its water circulates between three lakes, but canoes and boats cannot move from this one to the other because there are rock dams seperating them. The Ba Bể Lake is immense; its water is clear and blue like emerald; the lake is prominent in the middle of the majestic forests and mountains of the North Vietnam highlands.

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56.

THE KING OF COBRA

Near three centuries ago, in Tân Bằng, a village located along the Cán Gáo

riverside, U Minh Thượng Forest, Kiên Giang Province, it has been transmited by oral tradition that there was a giant snake couple which people called King and Queen of Cobra. Each year, on appointment day, from the Bay of Thailand the cobra couple came to bother the village.

The snake couple was big like a garbage container. When they came, the whole area was trembled by the storm beating down some shacks. The villager begged, praised, and promised to offer to the snake couple two children for their consumption. Since then they did not fierce as before.

To jump out of the frying pan into the fire: the snake couple caused less damage to the people, but since then, each year in turn two families had to submit their children to cruel snakes. That was an unfortunate issue to the people of Tân Bằng. Who would have dared to die in order to oppose the frightening power of the King and Queen of Cobra?

One year, there was an oriental medicine master—on his way to travel here and there—who flowed downstream in the Cán Gáo River; when reaching the boundary of Tân Bằng, he heard the bell and drum sounded noisily on the riverbank. He moved his canoe to the shore, got on riverbank, asked for information, and he knew that the people in the village was exercising a ceremony to offer two children to the snake couple.

Hearing the strange news, he was filled with pity for them; he got on the land and walked directly to where there was the drum sound in order to watch thoroughly. He saw the villagers were cleaning two children; then they exhaled the children with incense of aquilaria before offering them to the King and Queen of Cobra.

Realizing two innocent children going to be swallowed by the snakes, the oriental medicine master was full of emotion; so he asked:

- When will the King and Queen of Cobra come?

The village officials said:

- At midnight.

After some moment of thought, he called the village officials to come in order to discuss how to kill the snake couple. Hearing to kill the snake couple, all officials wanted. But there were some persons showed their hesitation; they said to the master that:

- Hey! In case the plan will not be successful, we cause more disaster to the village.

The oriental medicine master persuaded them:

- Don't worry! We just do like this… like this… The important thing is do not reveal the plan in advance so that people will be agog and the plan will have less chance to succeed.

In the next afternoon, the master and two village officials killed two big dogs in a hut at a deserted forest area. Then he ground some medicine pills very fine and put them inside the dogs' stomaches and then he sew them closely.

In that evening the people came to process the ceremony as usual. Only the parents of the two offered children cried bitterly while those children were fainted from hunger. The air was suffocated by the smell of aquilaria.

At 11 p.m., village officials instructed the people to go back home and to close their door tight, not permitting anyone being outside so that no one could be harmed by the snake couple. All people followed the instruction, except the parents of the two children were still crying.

Waiting until other people to go back home, the medicine master said to the parents:

- Now you bring your children back home! Don't let your neighbors know!

They were in a divided mind and worried:

- We fear the revenge from the snake couple.

- Never mind, just go fast so that I have enough time to cope with difficulties.

Following the master's instruction, two village officials camouflaged two dogs like two children with ink, paint, hair, and clothes. In addition, they carried two big cans of paint—one was in red and the other, in blue—and left them a little far from the ceremonial ground.

When the task was just completed, the forest trembled as if it would have been under a storm. The master made a signal with his hand to tell everyone to hide, watch, and wait.

At the ceremenial ground, the incense burner exhaled the smoke and smell of the aquilaria all over the place. Under the dimly-lit lamp, two camouflaged, made-up dogs resembled two children. Suddenly the storm stopped. The King and Queen of Cobra appeared. They crawled very close to the ground, slowly moved to the incense burner; then raised their heads to display their crests like two fans moving up and down. After that they advanced to their offered preys, then they bound and swallowed them. Some moment later, they crawled back and forth, slowly and sluggishly.

Waiting the anesthesia to be efficient, the master made a signal with his hands. Immediately from their hiding place some village officials run out, carried paint cans, and painted the snake couple: blue color for the male, red, for the female.

A village official did not know why… so he asked:

The master answered:

- Even though they are drugged, they are still very strong. We do not have many people; the best way is let they harm each other.

Gradually the anesthesia was dissolved. Slowly the King and Queen of Cobra were conscious. They raised their heads to look around; then they look at each other. Seeing the strange colors, they were panicked and considered each other as enemies of different races. Therefore, they rushed to bite each other; then they chased each other,

causing a storm. They chased, ran, and disappeared in the Thailand Bay.

Since then the snake couple did not come back to Tân Bằng anymore; no one knew they killed each other or not; they knew only after that time the snake couple did not dare to come to that area anymore.

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57.

SPEAKING DOG

EXPLANATION

- In former times, in South Vietnam, a "tổng" consisted of two or three villages and a county consisted of two or three "tổng."
- According to the customs of Vietnam, in the old days, a rich man could use his money to buy an honorary title/position so that in a feast/festivity he was arranged to sit at a high table and to eat ahead with other village officials.
- "Nén" was equal one-tenths of an ounce.
- Based on the Vietnamese language, "gâu gâu" is the barking sound of a dog.

In former times, in South Vietnam there was a richest old man in a village. Most of the money that he earned was from debts having interests more than their

capitals or from plots confiscating fields or houses of innocent people. The more he had money, the more he was harsh. Never had he accepted to give as charities. Always he concentrated to earn more money to be a richest man in his "tổng" so that he could sit at a high table and eat ahead.

He raised a black dog named Mực; he loved the dog more than his own son. He let the dog eat well as he did for himself; he allowed it to sleep on the bed and he took care it carefully. He often wished:

- If Mực knows how to speak the human language, I would be the most famous in the village. I will ask some money whenever someone wants to hear my dog speaking. And owing to that I will have a lot of money; I will sit at a high table and eat before other people.

One of his servants knew the master's thought; therefore, he fabricated a plot to make money from the master to his dislike. Waiting until his master was in good mood, he said:

- Dear master, I know a Taoist hermit in the mountain who knows to train the dog to speak the human language. If you permit me to lead Mực going to learn, definitely in three months the dog will speak like me.

The old man was very pleased, asking for the expense. The servant calculated approximately half ounce of silver, plus one-tenths for his travel expense.

The servant led the dog to leave. He did not go to the mountain, but he led the dog to his parents who lived quite far from there. He gave the dog to his parents to feed and also half ounce of silver to his father to buy a field for him. He stayed for some days, then he returned to his master and said:

- The Taoist hermit accepted the fee amd promised to train the dog to speak in two months, but he asked for three "nén" of silver more because of this intensive training.

Again the old man was very pleased with the hope that he would have the most special animal in the village. After that, he went all over the place to boast about his

dog and threatened that whoever looked him down, he would let the dog reproach that one instead of him.

The time went by so fast. Near the appointed day, he gave more money to the servant, plus two "nén" of silver for his travel expense.

The smart servant brought the money to his parents, asked them to keep and wait for him to come back in order to marry someone. He called the dog, carressed it, and showed his gratitude to it. Some days later he returned to his master's house alone.

The old man was surprised when he saw no dog, in a hurry he asked:

- Where is Mực? Where is Mực? Why

Do you come back alone?

Pretending to be very sad, he told the story:

- My dear master! I do not expect that

the dog was so ungrateful. The Taoist hermit already trained it to speak human language correctly like me; just seeing me it called my name right away. When I said some greeting sentences to Mực to test the hermit's talent, it answered smoothly as I'm talking to you now. Mực said that: "When I come back home, my master will know: I will tell all of crimes which my master has done so far, such as he gave extreme interest loans, duped someone to get his belongings, sued people to take their houses, robbed people's fields, bribed superior officials to oppress innocent fellowmen. I will accuse my master in front of province officials so that they arrest him and confiscate his properties…" My dear master, Mực said many more things, but I dare to tell all to you. In conclusion, Mực knew all bad things you did and it firmly determined to cause you being in jail. I was so upset and I got the cleaver to chop its head off.

The old man exuded sweat out of fear. He began to worry because of his evident crimes: if the dog exposed all, he would have not avoided calamity.

He thanked the servant who helped him to kill the "damned" dog and saved him

from disaster. He gave three "nén" of silver to the servant as a reward to him.

Since then, slowly he was less cruel and stingy because he feared that animals would have been able to speak and they would have not ignored his guilty actions.

For the servant's part, he requested for quitting his job. He came back to live with his parents and to cultivate his field; then he married and built his own home. He continued to raise Mực like other dogs; and Mực knew to speak "gâu gâu" only.

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58.

MT. BÀ ĐEN

EXPLANATION = GIẢI THÍCH

Mt Bà Đen = located in the Province of Tây Ninh, in the northwest of Saigon and approximately 150 km from Bến Thành Market.
Một = One
Chàm = a minority race mostly living in the south of the Center of Vietnam
Trảng Bàng = a county belonged to and in the south of Tây Ninh
Võ Tánh = a famous general of King Gia Long
King Gia Long = the first king of the Nguyễn Dynasty

The Tây Sơn = the dynasty before the Nguyễn Dynasty
Minh Mạng = the second king of the Nguyễn Dynasty
Lê Văn Duyệt = the most famous mandarine in the Nguyễn Dynasty. In Bà Chiểu (Gia Định) about 5 km from the Bến Thành Market, there has been a very big, well-known shrine to worship him daily by hundreds of people
Bình Định = a city in the Center of Vietnam, located in the south of Hue and in the north of Nha Trang
Khánh Hịa = a big province in the Center of Vietnam. Nha Trang is belonged to Khánh Hịa.
Bình Thuận = the most dried province of Vietnam, located in the southwest of Khánh Hịa.
Linh Sơn Thánh Mẫu = The Goddess of Sacred Mount

In former times, Mt. Bà Đen was called Mt. Một. On it there was a rock statue which had a supernatural power. The Vietnamese, Cambodian, Chàm, etc., together made the way clear to worship Buddha. They had to walk in groups because there were many tigers and leopards on the way.

At that time Lý Thị Thiên Hương, originally from Trảng Bàng, was a girl who had good skills in literature and martial art. In her very young age, her skin was black; but when she grew up, her complexion became beautiful.

Each full moon day, she climbed up the Mount to worship Buddha. In the village there was a young man named Lê Sĩ Triệt who fell in love with her.

One day, a Cambodian official planned to use force to kidnap her to be his mistress. Then he ordered a martial-art instructor to carry out the order. While Ms. Thiên Hương was defeated by the brute, suddenly Lê Sĩ Triệt made a dash for her rescue. Coming back home, she told her parents the circumstance. They agreed about their wedding. But at that time Võ Tánh recruited troops to help King Gia Long against the Tây Sơn and Lê Sĩ Triệt joined the army immediately.

Ms. Thiên Hương awaited Lê Sĩ Triệt's glory coming home day. Unfortunately, while praying at the Mount Một, the Cambodian bandits came and surrounded the area. She had to run into the forest and she disappeared forever.

In the year of King Minh Mạng, there was a monk residing as a Buddhist dignitary at Mount Một's pagoda. One day, while he recited Buddha prayer, the old monk saw a girl, with black face but beautiful, who appeared and resounded in afar:

- I am Lý Thị Thiên Hương! Being pursued by bandits, I felt into the ravine and died when I was 18 years of age. Now I reached Englightenment, please would you go down to the Southeast of the mountain slope, look for my corpse, and bury it…

As she said, the bonze superior found her corpse and brought it back to bury. Due to rumors, some Cambodians came to see her funeral, but just reaching the place they vomited blood, felt down, and died.

The First-rank Mandarine Official Lê Văn Duyệt heard the story; so he went to Mount One to investigate it true or not. He promised to report to the King to confer a posthumous title for Ms. Thiên Hương if she could demonstrate her achievement of sainthood in front of his eyes. When he just finished his words, Ms. Thiên Hương transmigrated into a girl's body and said:

- In the future your soul will be appointed highly sacred position but your corpse will have to be tortured.

He said:

- I do not request for knowing my future. I want to know your cause and reason.

The body wept and told him about her victimized death and also mentioned her predestined love tie with Lê Sĩ Triệt.

According to the story, following Võ Tánh Lê Sĩ Triệt committed suicide when Bình Định Fortress felt to the enemy, and he was appointed as a spiritual general managing two provinces Khánh Hòa and Bình Thuận. Because Ms. Thiên Hương and

Lê Sĩ Triệt would like have eternal lives, they did not sleep together. Owing to that she was permitted to come down to the Earth to help people.

Finishing her words, that girl fell down on her back and was unconscious for a long time, then she woke up.

Then, in the name of the King the First-rank Mandarine Official conferred Lý Thị Thiên Hương the posthumous title as "Linh Sơn Thánh Mẫu" (= The Goddess of Sacred Mount), residing at Mount Một which is Mount Bà Đen at the present time.

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PPS ***Một Đời Làm Thơ***
(***Composing Poems All My Life*** for Vietnamese readers)

Mộng Bình Thường
(***Ordinary Dream***, song for the Vietnamese)

FUTURE PUBLICATION

DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN IDIOMS
(Bilingual: English-Vietnamese)

Typing Fast and Less Errors
(for Vietnamese & English learners)

Tựa Bài & Tác Giả Tân Nhạc Việt Nam
(***Titles & Songwriters of Modern Vietnamese Music***)

…Trong Hồn …Trên Da
(***in Mind…on Skin***, short stories by Vuong Dang)

Văn, Thơ & Truyện Ngắn Vui T ếu
(***Comic Proses, Poems & Short Stories*** by Vuong Dang)

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Teaching Business Education in New Jersey, 1997

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In addition, Author Vuong Dang has more than 40 short works presented in www.youtube.com

SOME LINES ABOUT

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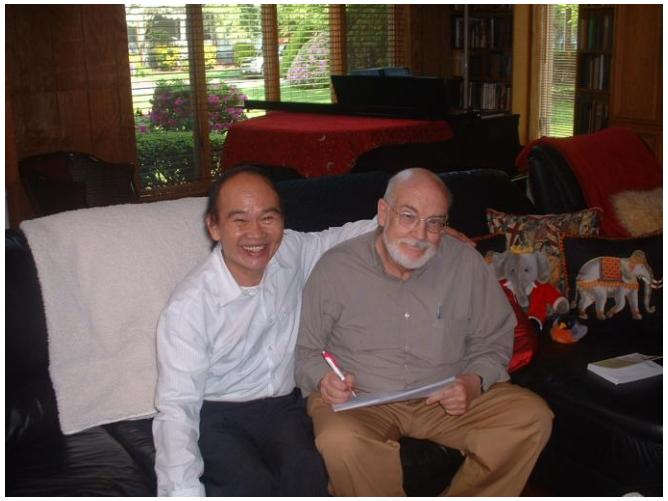
Dr. Evans was born in 1938 in Newark, NJ. He received the doctoral degree in English Comparative Literature from the Columbia University, New York City in 1970.

Coming to Kean University (formely named Kean College of New Jersey) he taught English for more than 35 years from 1972 to 2008. He taught courses on Shakespeare, Robert Frost, World Literature, and English Romantic Poetry. He heroes are Mozart, Debussy, T.S. Eliot, Robert Frost, Whitman. His Shakespeare's favorite plays are Hamlet and Twelfth Night.

Dr. Evans has travelled widely in the U.S., Canada, and Europe. His favorite city is London which he visited yearly for museums, historic sites, and especially theaters. He was an avid movie-goer and reader. He has many articles in book reviews. He owns 7000 books.



Dr. Evans and Vương Đằng